

ANTHONY J. BARBIERI-LOW

ANCIENT EGYPT AND EARLY CHINA

STATE,
SOCIETY,
AND
CULTURE



ANCIENT EGYPT AND EARLY CHINA

STATE, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE

ANTHONY J. BARBIERI-LOW

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS

Seattle

Ancient Egypt and Early China was supported by a grant from the McLellan Endowment, established through the generosity of Martha McCleary McLellan and Mary McLellan Williams.

This publication was made possible in part with support from the Barr Ferree Foundation Fund for Publications, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

The Metropolitan Center for Far Eastern Art Studies provided additional support for this book.

Copyright © 2021 by the University of Washington Press

Design by Katrina Noble

Composed in Minion Pro, typeface designed by Robert Slimbach

25 24 23 22 21 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS

uwapress.uw.edu

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Names: Barbieri-Low, Anthony J. (Anthony Jerome), 1967– author.

Title: Ancient Egypt and early China : state, society, and culture / Anthony J. Barbieri-Low.

Description: Seattle : University of Washington Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020053086 (print) | LCCN 2020053087 (ebook) | ISBN 9780295748894 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780295748900 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Civilization, Ancient. | Comparative civilization. | Egypt—Civilization—To 332 B.C. | Egypt—History—New Kingdom, ca. 1550–ca. 1070 B.C. | China—Civilization—221 B.C.–960 A.D. | China—History—Han dynasty, 202 B.C.–220 A.D.

Classification: LCC CB311 .B374 2021 (print) | LCC CB311 (ebook) | DDC 930/.5—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020053086>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020053087>

The paper used in this publication is acid free and meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984. ∞

To the memory of Bruce G. Trigger (1937–2006)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Chronology of China

Chronology of Egypt

INTRODUCTION

1. The Landscapes of the Nile and Yellow River

2. Empire and Diplomacy

3. Akhenaten, Wang Mang, and the Limits of Reform

4. Legal Principles and the Administration of Justice

5. Scribal Culture in Life and Death

6. Providing a Model Afterlife (coauthored with Marissa A. Stevens)

Color Plates

7. Gaming the Way to Paradise

EPILOGUE

Glossary of Chinese Names and Terms

Glossary of Egyptian Names and Terms

Notes

Works Cited

Index

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The seeds for this project were sown long ago, during reading courses with my graduate advisor Robert W. Bagley at Princeton. With his passion for Egyptology and the work of anthropologist Bruce G. Trigger, Bagley inspired me to use a comparative methodology when studying any phenomenon in early China. I thank him wholeheartedly for his insights and inspiration.

Early in my professional career, I discovered the work of Mu-chou Poo, who was trained as an Egyptologist, but who primarily works in the field of Sinology. He inspired me to pursue a second field in Egyptology and has since invited me to Hong Kong to share the results of my research.

Primary funding for this project came from a generous New Directions Fellowship from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which allotted me teaching leave and the funding to obtain graduate training in Egyptology at UCLA and to take research trips to Egypt and Europe. During the final year of this project, I received the Yvette and William Kirby Centennial Fellowship in Chinese Studies from the ACLS, which gave me an uninterrupted year to finish the manuscript. Generous support from the Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts at UCSB also helped with image permissions and student assistance.

My time as a visiting scholar at UCLA really made this book possible. Thanks goes first to Kathlyn Cooney, who took a chance on sponsoring a Chinese historian she did not know, with his pipe dream of learning Egyptology along with her graduate students. I am grateful for the hundreds of conversations we had in seminars and in social settings, and her introductions to other scholars in the field. When I asked her right away if she could arrange a special seminar on the important site of Deir el-Medina, which figures prominently in this book, she immediately said yes. I also thank her for guiding me through the collection of the Museo Egizio in Turin. Thanks also goes to Deanna Kiser-Go for her stimulating seminar on Theban tombs. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Jacco Dieleman for his rigorous courses in all phases of the Egyptian language, which introduced me to a new world of literature and documents.

Later in the project I also benefited from the advice of Stuart Tyson Smith of UCSB, as well as the indefatigable John Baines of Oxford, Ben Haring and Koen Donker van Heel of Leiden, and Niv Allon of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I also wish to thank Martin Kern of Princeton University for inviting me to join his International Center for the Study of Ancient Text Cultures at Renmin University of China and for arranging useful workshops, such as the one in 2019 comparing text cultures in China and Egypt.

I would especially like to thank Marissa Stevens for all her help on this journey. When she was a graduate student at UCLA, she agreed to become my first Egyptian language tutor, cramming a year of Middle Egyptian into a spring and summer of private tutoring. For the nearly three years I attended Egyptology courses at ULCA, Marissa was my classmate, and I learned greatly from her expertise, as well as from the other students in her cohort, Carrie Arbuckle, Luke Breinig, Roselyn Campbell, and Michael Chen. Michael and Marissa were very helpful in Skyping me in to some class meetings, so I did not always have to drive two hours to attend. One evening at a conference dinner, I told Marissa my ideal outline for an “Egypt and China” book and mentioned that I would like to coauthor a chapter with her. Our collaboration on [chapter 6](#) (on tomb models) was very “efficacious” and enjoyable, and included a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to view the Meketre models and a conference at Bryn Mawr College on comparative mortuary culture. I also asked Marissa to edit the manuscript and to secure image permissions for Egyptian objects. I cannot thank her enough for her valuable contributions in all these areas.

I would also like to express my thanks to three graduate research assistants at USCB who helped with some basic research and editing. Dou Lei and Li Xiang assisted with bibliographic work and research summaries, and QZ Lau helped construct the maps and tables for the book and arrange for image permissions with Chinese institutions. Early in the project, undergraduate assistants Ilya Bobkov and Irene Rauch also helped with some bibliographic work in European languages, and Anthony Nguyen helped populate an image database.

Other colleagues at Santa Barbara who gave valuable feedback include John Lee, Li Xiaorong, Luke Roberts, Beth Digeser, Sharon Farmer, and Erika Rappaport.

And finally, I would like to thank scholars and centers at the Early China Seminar at Columbia University (Li Feng), University of Texas at Austin (Li Huaiyin), UCLA Center for the Study of Religion, Princeton University (Martin Kern), Confucius Institute of UCSB (Mayfair Yang), Freiburg University (Sitta von Reden), Hong Kong Baptist University (Sammy Li), Chinese University of Hong Kong (Mu-chou Poo), the University of Florida (Lai Guolong), Bryn Mawr College (Shi Jie), Renmin University of China (Martin Kern and Xu Jianwei), Xiamen University (Mu-chou Poo), Notre Dame University (Liang Cai), the Archaeological Institute of America, Santa Barbara Museum of Art (Susan Tai), and Yale University (Mick Hunter) for inviting me to give lectures on parts of this project and for providing valuable feedback.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA

- Shang 1500–ca. 1045 BCE
- Zhou 1045–256 BCE
 - Western Zhou 1045–771 BCE
 - Eastern Zhou 771–256 BCE
 - Spring and Autumn period (Chunqiu) 722–481 BCE
 - Warring States period (Zhanguo) 453–221 BCE
- Qin 221–207 BCE
- Han 206 BCE–220 CE
 - Western Han 206 BCE–8 CE
 - Xi (Wang Mang reign) 9–23 CE
 - Eastern Han 25–220 CE
- Three Dynasties 220–280
 - Nan-Bei Chao 220–589
 - San Guo (Three Kingdoms) 220–280
 - Wei 220–265
 - Shu 221–263
 - Wu 222–280
- Jin 265–420
 - Western Jin 265–316
 - Eastern Jin 317–420
- Sixteen Kingdoms 304–534
- Nan-Bei Chao (Southern and Northern Dynasties) 420–589
 - Northern Dynasties 386–581
 - Northern Wei 386–534
 - Eastern Wei 534–550
 - Western Wei 535–556
 - Northern Qi 550–577
 - Northern Zhou 557–581
 - Southern Dynasties 420–579
 - Liu Song 420–479
 - Qi 479–502
 - Liang 502–557
 - Chen 557–589
- Sui 581–618
- Tang 618–907
- Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 907–960
- Song 960–1127
- Yuan 1271–1368
- Ming 1368–1644
- Qing 1644–1911
- People's Republic of China 1949–present

907–979 Kingdoms (South China)
960–1279
960–1127 Northern Song period
1127–1279 Southern Song period
916–1125
X088–1227
Jin15–1234
Y271–1368
M168–1644
Q686–1912
Republic of China
People's Republic of China

Source: Based on Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 3–4 with modifications.

CHRONOLOGY OF EGYPT

Pre-4500 to 3000 BCE

ca. 3200 to 3000 BCE

Early 3000 to 2670 BCE

ca. 3050–2850 BCE

ca. 2850 to 2670 BCE

Old 2670 to 2168 BCE

ca. 2670 to 2600 BCE

ca. 2600 to 2480 BCE

ca. 2480–2350 BCE

ca. 2350–2300 BCE

ca. 2300 to 2140 BCE Dynasties

First 2168 to 2040 BCE Period

ca. 2168 to 2040 BCE Dynasties

ca. 2140 to 2040 BCE

Mid 2040 to 1990 BCE

ca. 2040 to 1990 BCE (cont.)

ca. 1990 to 1809 BCE

ca. 1809 to 1640 BCE Thirteenth Dynasties

Second 1640 to 1540 BCE Period

ca. 1640 to 1540 BCE Dynasties

ca. 1540 to 1540 BCE

New 1540 to 1086 BCE

ca. 1540 to 1302 BCE

ca. 1302 to 1198 BCE

ca. 1198 to 1086 BCE

Third 1086 to 664 BCE Period

Twentieth 664 to 610 BCE

ca. 664 to 610 BCE

ca. 610 to 525 BCE

ca. 525 to 404 BCE

ca. 404 to 399 BCE

ca. 399 to 364 BCE

664–364 BCE

664–525 BCE Sixth Dynasty (cont.)

525–404 BCE Seventh Dynasty

404–399 BCE Eighth Dynasty

399–364 BCE Ninth Dynasty

380-340 BCE Dynasty
 343-332 BCE Persian Period
 332-330 BCE
 332-304 BCE Ptolemaic
 304-30 BCE
 30 BCE
 30 BCE-394 CE
 394-640 CE
 640-629 CE
 629-640 CE
 640-661 CE
 661-750 CE
 750-1517 CE
 1517-1869 CE
 1869-1914 CE
 1914-1953
 1953-present

Source: Based on *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* Preferred Chronology <https://uee.cdih.ucla.edu/chronology> and University College London Chronology www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/chronology/index.html, with some modifications based on Dee et al., “Absolute Chronology.”

* Following the conventions of Egyptology, the word “Dynasty” is capitalized when part of the name of a historical period. For Chinese dynasties, the word is lowercase.

Introduction

Scholars have engaged in the comparative study of ancient civilizations since the enlightenment, and in recent decades they have produced an admirable body of work comparing aspects of early China with analogous phenomena in Greece or Rome. To these scholars, the Greco-Roman comparisons are self-evident, while juxtaposing the politics, laws, or religions of Egypt and China would be to compare the incomparable, like apples to oranges. In fact, and in metaphor, that is exactly what this book endeavors to do.

Let us play with this colorful metaphor for a bit. While some have criticized that comparing apples to oranges is an entirely fruitless endeavor, there is much knowledge to be harvested, far more than can be gained if apples are only studied by Appleologists and oranges by Orangeologists. So, how does one productively compare apples to oranges? First, one notices that they are both the spherical, seed-bearing fruit of deciduous trees, with a single fruit per stem. Those are structural similarities, related to their function and evolution. But, it is only when we draw apples and oranges into a comparison that we can truly appreciate their specific particularities: their flavor and texture. In other words, it is only when we compare apples to oranges that we can truly appreciate how sweet and crunchy the apple is and how tart and juicy the orange is. So, this book aims to draw the flavor and texture out of ancient Egypt and early China through comparative study.

Goals of Comparative Study

Why would a Sinologist like myself choose to engage in comparative study? Why not devote my energies to a contextualized social history, like my first book, *Artisans in Early Imperial China*, or a translation of a newly discovered text, like *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China*? Since completing those projects, I have become keenly aware that to keep making progress in understanding early imperial China, and to avoid the trap of overspecialization that leads to claims of essentialism or exceptionalism, it is necessary to move outside of East Asia and seek further insight through a reflective analysis in the mirror of comparison. Comparative study is the way forward.

For many ancient historians it is probably daunting, if not terrifying, to consider adopting comparative study, especially if one is already well advanced

in their specialized field. But as many have pointed out, comparative exercises are already familiar, for all human knowledge is generated through a process of comparison, whether explicit or implied, and the standard historical method is inherently comparative.¹ For example, an assertion such as “The Qin and Han empires were highly bureaucratized” already carries with it two comparative inferences: that the early imperial dynasties of China were more bureaucratized than the Warring States polities, and that these Chinese empires had a more complex administration than other comparable ancient world empires such as Achaemenid Persia or the late Roman Republic or Principate. Thus, if scholars are engaged in comparative study anyway, they might as well be very clear about their goals and methodology so as to avoid the common pitfalls that await the unwary comparative scholar.

So, what can be gained by comparing civilizations East and West, and why is it becoming a stronger trend in the field?² First, in the words of Steven Shankman and Stephen Durrant, “Through making comparisons, the familiar becomes strange, and the strange somewhat more familiar.”³ When one spends years studying early imperial China, one becomes accustomed to certain explanations or phenomena that supposedly explain the distinctiveness of China, which over time seem natural or inevitable. But what if a very similar outcome in another region of the world came about under similar circumstances? How does that force us to rethink our conclusions about the Chinese case?

Engaging in comparison also breaks scholars out of their “walled gardens” and combats the hyperspecialization and obsession with content over context that hampers many fields of ancient history.⁴ Egyptologists often focus their attention on particular monuments and texts, arguing over historical or philological minutiae, while ignoring the broader context of these items for Egyptian civilization as a whole or for ancient history in general. They insist that the only way to gain knowledge of ancient Egypt is to study the remains of Egyptian civilization.⁵ But what if a better way to learn about ancient Egypt were also to study another civilization in a reflective analysis?

This relates to the issue of perspective, or the modes of investigation, in comparative studies: the so-called A and B issue. Let us say that A is early imperial China and B is ancient Rome. If one spends their entire career studying the intricacies of some aspect of A and frequently makes the case for the exceptionalism of A, or causal explanations for how aspects of A developed, can these claims really be legitimate without reference to B?⁶ In other words, it is only through comparative study of B that one can begin to understand the true nature of A. But comparative study is flexible, and scholars do not just have to use the comparative case to illuminate or clarify their own major field of study. They can also move back and forth between A and B in a mutually reflective analysis, so that both cultures can be more meaningfully illuminated.⁷

An added benefit of comparative study is scholarly innovation. Once an academic has moved beyond his or her traditional field and training and has brought in another object of study, this helps raise new questions that might not have been asked if they had remained inside their disciplinary mental walls.⁸ It also prompts one to question such traditional categories as “philosophy,” “mathematics,” or “art.”⁹ This destabilization and

defamiliarization might initially feel uncomfortable, but the discomfort is ultimately salutary, for it forces the scholar to invent new methods and categories to analyze a seemingly unmanageable body of material.

Comparative history is also an excellent tool that promises to decenter the nation-state from its reified place as the predominant frame of reference in historical thinking.¹⁰ If one looks at particular themes or processes that cross-cut modern national boundaries—such as migration, sexuality, food, or environmental history—barriers begin to dissolve, allowing us to view the history of humanity in terms other than those bounded by ancient or modern state systems.

Finally, the ultimate goal of comparative history, or of any good history for that matter, is to move beyond description toward causal explanations of historical phenomena, uncovering the “robust processes” that led to particular outcomes in multiple places and times.¹¹ But one should be cautious to differentiate these processes from any sort of universal laws, for human beings and their societies are not Newtonian bodies, and no laws can predict their actions, even under identical circumstances. However, the comparative historian can certainly identify and explain, *after the fact*, what processes caused similar outcomes.

Methodologies of Comparative Study

Ancient historian Walter Scheidel asserts that “comparison is perhaps best defined as a perspective or an approach rather than a formal method.”¹² In fact, there is no standard accepted methodology for comparative study, and scholars have devised various means to achieve their goals. All of them, however, involve both an assessment of similarities and differences between various cultures, as well as an examination of input variables with convergent or divergent outcomes.

In an influential review article, sociologists Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers outlined three major “logics” they detected in a survey of modern comparative scholarship.¹³ In the first type, “parallel demonstration of theory,” certain comparative scholars first devise a theory or ideal type and then examine a variety of cultures to demonstrate the validity of the theory or applicability of the ideal type. It is really a method that illustrates the theory, and critics have pointed out that no number of illustrations can ever truly prove a theory. In this method, the focus is clearly on similarities between cases, for minor differences based on historical context just serve to highlight the adherence to the general theory. In their second method, “contrast of contexts,” scholars identify clear-cut differences between cultures as a means to highlight the unique and “irreducible wholeness” of the studied cultures, and they are reluctant to use this analysis to formulate general theories. The method underscores key differences between greatly contrasting cultures, so that “they form a kind of commentary on one another’s character.”¹⁴ Finally, the third method surveyed is called “macro-causal analysis,” typified by the work of Skocpol herself.¹⁵ In this method, comparative history is used to repudiate old theories and to formulate new historical generalizations. Both similarities and differences are highlighted, using methods similar to John

Stuart Mill's "method of agreement" and "method of difference," to isolate causal variables that explain particular historical outcomes.

The approach of Bruce G. Trigger in his monumental *Understanding Early Civilizations* also considers both similarities and differences.¹⁶ He does this to untangle shared structural traits (constrained by human nature, environment, or other developmental factors) from cultural or historical particularities. This is the approach I have adopted in this book, and my metaphor of apples and oranges demonstrates how one can consider both the structural traits of shape and function, while bringing out distinctions of flavor and texture.

Difficulties of Comparative History

Comparative study can be a difficult and daunting proposition, as it requires a scholar to move beyond their primary field of expertise. When working in modern history, this might involve learning the historiography of a second field or the acquisition of another modern language, both of which entail a significant time investment. Those problems are magnified when embarking on comparative ancient history, for the time required to "come up to speed" in a field like Egyptology or Roman History is essentially the duration of a standard PhD program: four to seven years. In an ideal world, one would familiarize oneself with the historiography of the new field and acquire additional ancient languages with their accompanying paleography. Because of funding constraints and "time to degree" in graduate programs, as well as time limitations for tenure at universities, these ideal arrangements are rarely attainable.

Thus, scholars brave enough to engage in comparative study often have to rely on translations and secondary scholarship in their nonprimary fields. Since a translation of an ancient text is by nature a translator's unique interpretation, relying on translations unconsciously forces a comparative scholar to follow uncritically the interpretations of others. Exclusive dependence on secondary scholarship suffers from the same limitation, which is magnified when relying on multiple secondary works that conflict in their basic interpretation of the material. In my project, I have been fortunate enough to have acquired sufficient competency in Egyptology to engage almost exclusively with primary source materials.

One effective way others have superseded the "problem of competency" is to collaborate with a scholar in the other field who can provide the necessary expertise in primary languages and historiography. This meeting of the minds can sometimes provide new insights and approaches that would not be generated by the single-scholar approach, but the downside is that the work might lack coherence or the overarching narrative that a single scholar could provide.

Another problem that can arise with comparative study is decontextualization. Many historians insist that historical processes are "deeply embedded" in the cultural context and cannot be isolated for independent analysis.¹⁷ Comparative study necessarily decontextualizes historical elements to draw them out for comparison. Traditional historians also insist that interpretations remain close to the original sources, but comparison forces

scholars to deviate from the usual thick description of context to engage in broader analysis. The more societies that are brought in for comparison, the greater the problem of decontextualization. Part of the goal of this book is to retain some of the thick description of events, people, and material culture that make history engaging, while frequently zooming out to make broader comparisons that lead to new insights. So, this book will narrate the lives of several non-elite persons, including scribes, workers, widows, and fallen princesses, returning a voice to the voiceless classes.

In a recent review article, Philippa Levine reminds us of several other pitfalls which can ensnare those who engage in comparative history. While comparative history can serve as an ideal tool to decenter the idea of the nation from historical analysis, scholars often still fall into the trap of “nationalism” when selecting units for comparison.¹⁸ For the ancient world, this is a glaring issue, for no such political unit as Greece or China existed before modern times. The hazard of “universalism” (usually associated with early twentieth-century scholars like Arnold J. Toynbee or Oswald Spengler) assumes that there is a universal human nature that operates at all times and in all places, leading all human societies along a similar trajectory. A related universalist problem is “determinism,” which posits that certain social processes are predetermined by material forces (e.g., the Marxist stages of history) or that historical outcomes are largely determined by geographic and environmental factors (e.g., the Jared Diamond hypothesis). The trap of “essentialism” assumes that one can isolate through comparative study the essential feature that can explain everything one needs to know about a particular culture (e.g., the warlike essence of steppe nomads). The related problem of “exceptionalism” arises when scholars use a comparison of differences to showcase why one culture (or nation) is exceptional. This can be used both to valorize historical phenomena, such as British imperial policies, or to demonize them, as in the case of Hitler’s Germany.

Comparative Studies of Early China and Ancient Greece

The comparative study of ancient civilizations and empires is currently a vibrant field in academia since it has distanced itself from older universalizing and essentializing approaches. Armed with the proper training and methodological tools, the comparative historian has a golden opportunity to answer many novel questions about ancient worlds and can begin to formulate theories about historical processes.

The oldest and most-developed field of comparative study between early China and an ancient Mediterranean civilization focuses on Greece and China, especially in the areas of science, medicine, philosophy, historiography, and comparative literature, with more recent work on comparative studies of ethnicity and religion.

The outstanding early work in this field was the monumental *Science and Civilisation in China* project of Joseph Needham. The unfolding of Chinese science and technology could really only be told in comparison and contrast to the archetype of Greek science, and in volume two of the series (on the history of scientific thought), Needham refers to Greek science on hundreds of

occasions, including forty references to Aristotle alone.¹⁹ Though Needham's comprehensive and exhaustive work usually lets the Chinese material speak for itself, roundly praising its precocious technological breakthroughs, it has also been justly criticized as being based on the misguided question, born of European exceptionalism: Why did modern science only develop in Europe and not in China, when China had so many early advances?²⁰

From the mid-1990s onward the stalwart of the Greece-China field has been Geoffrey Lloyd.²¹ In his earlier work on the rise of scientific thought in Greece, Lloyd had formulated the theory that it was a particular competitive social setting and style of argument, born of political discussions and legal complaints, that gave rise to Greek scientific thought. After a trip to China, he decided to test his theory against the Chinese evidence. In a series of books, culminating in the accessible *The Way and the Word*, coauthored with Nathan Sivin, he compared the social and political settings in both ancient Greece and early China that gave rise to theories explaining the natural world.²² Lloyd constantly rejected an essentialist approach that focused on particular Greek or Chinese "mentalities" that were used to explain the differences between Greek and Chinese scientific thought, viewing this approach as a nonexplanation. He also avoided comparing individual theories from each culture, preferring to view them as responses to different questions, part of a "manifold" of social and cultural practices.

Since the late 1980s there has also been a burst of activity in comparative Greek and Chinese philosophy. In many ways this is a more problematic comparison than the history of science comparisons of Lloyd, because the issues of commensurability and translatability are thornier, and contemporary philosophy, as defined by the Western tradition, is always searching for coherence and relevance among these ancient Chinese ideas, which were not intended to answer the same set of questions that Western philosophy asks.²³

In a longstanding collaboration, Sinologist Roger T. Ames and philosopher David L. Hall published a series of three books, two of which explicitly utilized comparisons between Greek and Chinese texts to launch a dialogue between the philosophical traditions East and West.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, a collaborative project between Sinologist Stephen Durrant and comparative literature specialist Steven Shankman sought to compare early China and ancient Greece using methods of comparative literature to explore the divergent paths of history and philosophy, without falling into the trap of essentialist "mentalities" warned against by Lloyd.²⁵ Lisa Raphals has also published extensively on Greece and early China comparisons, including two monographs and numerous articles on science, medicine, gender, literature, and philosophy, and Hyun Jin Kim has recently published a book which compares the Greek and Chinese portrayals of the barbarian "other."²⁶

The most recent contribution to this field is the collection of papers, edited by Geoffrey Lloyd and Jingyi Jenny Zhao, *Ancient Greece and China Compared* (2018). This collection demonstrates that the comparative study of Greece and China is still strongly focused on the history of ideas in context and has not yet seriously entered the territory of comparative studies of politics, law, empire, administration, and finance, which is currently the domain of Rome and China comparisons, to which we now turn.

Comparative Studies of Early China and Ancient Rome

The Greece-China field certainly had a generous head start, for prior to the turn of the millennium, only the occasional intrepid historian ventured into the comparative field of ancient Rome and early China.²⁷ In 2003, classicist Fritz-Heiner Mutschler and Sinologist Achim Mittag began a joint project to comparatively study Roman and Chinese historiography. This resulted in the publication of *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared* (2008).²⁸ The explicit goal of their project was to study the “mental images” and representations of the Roman and Han empires from a comparative perspective, and they consciously limited the scope to the history of ideas. The approach of the conference volume was to focus on certain themes such as imperial historiography and rhetoric, cartography, art and architecture, and religious and philosophical evolution, assigning one Romanist and one early China scholar to write parallel essays on the same theme. While each of the essays is fascinating and serious scholarship, there are only a few explicit comparisons within the essays themselves, bypassing an excellent opportunity for collaboration. An epilogue by the editors serves as the only synthesis and comparative reflection of the juxtaposed papers.

Soon after, in 2005, Walter Scheidel launched the “Stanford Ancient Chinese and Mediterranean Empires Comparative History Project,” with a goal of stimulating greater comparative study of the Roman Empire and early China.²⁹ The project has currently yielded four conferences or meetings, two impressive edited volumes, and several other related publications. Scheidel felt that even though substantial work had been published in the areas of comparative philosophy and historiography between the ancient Mediterranean and China, far greater knowledge could be gained through comparative study of imperial dynamics, state formation, and state institutions.

The first published volume, *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires* (2009), made a major contribution to the field of comparative ancient history. In his introduction, Scheidel asserts that Han China and the Roman Empire are the most obvious, and probably the only, appropriate dyad for comparison, because not only did they occupy a similar amount of territory and have a similar number of subjects, but each had also absorbed nearly all other polities in its area to become a “near-monopolistic super-state.” In other words, they were two of a very small number of “core-wide empires” on earth at the time and the only two that he believed were comparable. Scheidel also details a long-list of convergent developments between the two, along with a list of prominent divergences, raising a host of addressable problems.

The methodology of the project was to follow a case-oriented approach to “investigate historical variation and to offer causal explanations of particular outcomes by identifying critical differences between similar situations.”³⁰ In the *Rome and China* volume, a group of seven chapters investigate various aspects of state-society relations. Each scholar wrote their chapter as a solo effort, usually leaning heavily on secondary scholarship and translations for analysis of the field in which they were not trained.

The second edited volume of the Stanford project, *State Power in Ancient China and Rome* (2015), builds upon the framework of the previous volume,

attempting to provide concrete comparisons regarding key aspects of state power, such as decision-making, bureaucracy, state re-formation, urbanism, and finance. Unlike the uniform approach in *Rome and China*, the second volume uses a variety of approaches to the problem of how to conduct comparative history, including coauthored chapters with a specialist from each area working together, separate parallel chapters written by two specialists, and unified comparisons by one author working in both areas.

Finally, there is the Global Antiquities program currently based at McGill University, led by Griet Vankeerberghen and (formerly by) Hans Beck, which has been training graduate students in comparative history and holding regular conferences comparing early China with the Greco-Roman world, the first of which will be published as *Rulers and Ruled in Ancient Greece, Rome, and China*.³¹

Comparative Studies of Early China and Ancient Egypt

In contrast to the modern scholarship comparing early China to Greece or Rome, very little recent work has been done to bring ancient Egypt into the conversation. In the middle of the twentieth century, however, the situation was quite different. The comparative study of Egypt and China was central to the formulation of the theory of “hydraulic civilization” in historical sociologist Karl Wittfogel’s work (1938; 1957)³² and the more developed anthropological theories of cultural evolution it influenced, such as Julian Steward’s “Cultural Causality and Law” (1949).³³ Egypt and China were also part of the core “historical bureaucratic civilizations” that served to illustrate S. N. Eisenstadt’s theories in *The Political Systems of Empires* (1963).³⁴ Finally, Robert Carneiro’s concisely formulated “A Theory of the Origin of the State” (1970), which focused on the relationship between bounded environments and warfare over land in the rise of state-level society, brought Egypt and China into comparative analysis, along with the other pristine civilizations of the Old and New Worlds.

During subsequent decades, it was really only through the admirable work of anthropologist Bruce G. Trigger that Egypt and China comparisons remained in the scholarly discourse. Building on his earlier brief studies (1979, 1993, 1997), Trigger published the results of his decades of work on comparative civilizations in *Understanding Early Civilizations* (2003), which compares aspects of seven early states, including agriculture, kingship, urbanism, literacy, religion, and more.³⁵ In recent years, Mu-chou Poo’s thought-provoking study *Enemies of Civilization* (2005) focused on the view of foreigners and the formation of cultural consciousness in Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia, while Wang Haicheng’s *Writing and the Ancient State* (2014) focuses on the role of writing in the formation and perpetuation of early states in China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the New World.

Thus, although some excellent recent comparative studies of Egypt and China have been published, it is important to ask why there has been such an expanding wave of recent published studies comparing early China with ancient Greece or the Roman Empire, while the comparative study of Egypt and China has barely made a ripple.³⁶

At the practical level, Egyptology remains a very small and mostly insular field. There are only fifty-four PhD granting programs in Egyptology worldwide with only ten in North America.³⁷ Compare that with the five hundred Greco-Roman historians who hold a faculty position just at English-speaking institutions, and one can see the imbalance.³⁸ Furthermore, with a few notable exceptions like John Baines, many Egyptologists still believe that the best way to understand ancient Egypt is to study only ancient Egypt, rather than looking at insights gained from a broader comparative study of ancient civilizations.³⁹

Among early China scholars, there are some who studied Greek and/or Latin as part of a traditional education and who feel somewhat competent utilizing ancient Mediterranean materials in their studies. However, except for Mu-chou Poo, almost none have a background in Egyptology, so they do not feel comfortable making cross-societal comparisons between China and Egypt.

Another reason for the imbalance of comparative studies of China-Egypt versus China-Greece or China-Rome might involve the types of surviving written materials from each civilization. In China there is a long tradition of annalistic and narrative history that goes back well into the first millennium BCE. Starting with the Han period, these histories are firmly associated with named authors like Sima Qian (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) and Ban Gu (32–92 CE), providing scholars with ample evidence to study the construction of history and its sources and biases. In Greece, the tradition of narrative history begun by Herodotus and continued by Thucydides provides a very logical point of comparison with China that has been explored by several scholars. Comparisons between Sima Qian and Roman historians like Tacitus have also been attempted. In the case of Egypt, however, there was no comparable tradition of narrative history until the Ptolemaic period, when traditional Egyptian civilization was already in decline. Thus, the sources that survive from Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom Egypt, such as instructions, admonitions, and long-form poetry, provide no historical counterpoint to the writings of Sima Qian or Herodotus.

There is also the sense among early China scholars that Egypt is simply a place that is situated “out of time.” They view ancient Egypt as an archaic state, thousands of years older than the Roman Empire, and thus off limits for comparison with early China. It seems more appropriate to them to compare the Warring States period with classical Greece due to the shared phenomena of splintered polities and the prominence of philosophical discourse, or to compare the Han empire to the Roman Empire, since they were long-lasting empires that held territories comparable in size and population (fig. 1.1). But, an often-unspoken motivation behind these comparison-pairs appears to be a concern for contemporaneity, insisting that two cultures must be roughly contemporary to be comparable.⁴⁰ This is quite misguided. No anthropologist would ever make this statement, because for an anthropologist, it is the underlying social and economic structures, or stage of social evolution, which should be comparable. The time period is immaterial.

Justification and Chapter Summary

I would argue that it is preferable to pick subjects for comparison that were

separated by great distances and were nowhere close to contemporary in time, for great historical distance essentially guarantees no possibility of direct contact or influence. I would suggest that comparing early China with the Roman Empire is not ideal, because the two were aware of each other and may have even been in contact on a mercantile level. Indeed, there is mounting evidence of sustained cultural contact between East Asia and the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds throughout the late first millennium BCE, and one could argue that such cross-cultural influence might even “contaminate” the comparative exercise. For example, did the Qin polity of the late Warring States implement a pony express system for important communications solely because of internal factors, or did they learn of the famous Persian royal road system that operated all the way into Afghanistan, not so far from the Qin state?

Looking at the issue from a structural standpoint, primary state formation in Egypt occurs around 3200 BCE with the formation of a unified realm, a defined ideology of kingship, and social classes that cut across kinship groups. The earliest state-level society in China is probably that centered around the Erlitou site in Henan, around 1800 BCE, or possibly slightly earlier at the site of Taosi in Shanxi (ca. 2000 BCE). Since the rise of social complexity in China was “delayed” compared to civilizations in the Near East, it makes sense that structurally based comparisons between the two cultures would be skewed chronologically. Thus, Bruce Trigger in his study of early civilizations compares the Shang dynasty (ca. 1500–1045 BCE) of China to the Old Kingdom in Egypt (2670–2168 BCE), since these were both early archaic states, defined by Trigger as the first “class-based” societies (fig. 1.1).⁴¹

In this book, I have chosen to compare primarily New Kingdom Egypt (ca. 1548–1086 BCE) with the Western Han period (202 BCE–8 CE) in China, since this is the appropriate comparison from a structural standpoint, despite the thirteen-hundred-year disparity on an absolute chronological scale. And while comparability does not necessarily require underlying similarities, Han China and New Kingdom Egypt do share some structural similarities and convergent developments that make the comparison quite compelling. First, each civilization was centered around a major river that was prone to flooding and which played a key role in the political legitimation of the sovereign ([chapter 1](#)). Both Western Han China and New Kingdom Egypt conquered vast new territories to form empires, conducting diplomacy and warfare with major peer polities and building a network of vassal states ([chapter 2](#)). A couple hundred years after their founding, both of these empires underwent a period of radical (and ultimately unsuccessful) reform led by charismatic rulers ([chapter 3](#)). Similarly, each state proclaimed an ideology of universal justice guaranteed by the ruler and dispensed through legal courts ([chapter 4](#)). Furthermore, each empire was administered by highly trained scribes who were conscious and proud of their occupational identity ([chapter 5](#)). And finally, each culture conceived of the human soul as a composite entity and developed elaborate conceptions of an afterlife world where it would reside, including miniature realms outfitted with architectural models and figurines ([chapter 6](#)), as well as lush, paradisiacal realms for the worthy ([chapter 7](#)).

And while it is fortuitous that New Kingdom Egypt and Han China share so many of these structural traits and cultural developments, we do not require our comparison pair to be identical to conduct our analysis; they only have to

be comparable, and what determines if they are comparable depends upon the questions one wants to ask and what sources are available to answer them. Indeed, any two human cultures, from any two time periods, can be comparable; it all depends on what questions one is trying to answer.

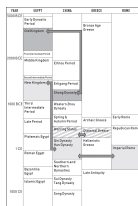


Figure 1.1. Comparison pairs among ancient Eurasian civilizations. Drawn by QZ Lau.

Drawing on this survey, we see that when one wants to query the development of political philosophy or critical historiography, Greece and China form a natural comparison dyad, because comparable sources exist from each culture to address those questions. If we tried to ask the same questions for China and Egypt, we would be greatly disappointed, for Egypt developed no comparable traditions of historiography or moral-political philosophy. This works conversely, too, for if we chose Greece and China as our comparison-pair to investigate the role of major flood-prone rivers in the legitimization of the ruler (as in [chapter 1](#)), we would run into a wall quickly, for the two are not at all comparable in this regard.

The New Kingdom period in Egypt was inaugurated when the Theban warrior pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty overthrew the Hyksos rulers in the Delta, reunifying the “Two Lands” of Egypt after a period of civil war and division, and then “extended the frontiers” to form a sizeable empire, including much of Nubia and the Levant. The New Kingdom was built on the foundations of fifteen hundred years of Egyptian dynastic civilization, the monuments of which were ever-present on the physical and mental landscapes. Reflecting on the past accomplishments of rulers and sages, the New Kingdom selectively chose historical and ideological models to build their state, but also introduced significant innovations in the areas of law and administration. The New Kingdom was also more overtly “nationalist” and belligerent than past Egyptian regimes, with a distinctive new military culture. With their sudden invasion into the venerable and contentious Near East, Egypt also had to adapt to a complex international scene and learn new rules of engagement for things like diplomatic marriages and envoy correspondence. The religious sphere also saw a continuation of the trend toward “democratizing the afterlife,” where it appears that afterlife realms and powerful ritual tools once reserved for the king first trickled down to local rulers, and then disseminated into lower classes in society. The end of the Eighteenth Dynasty also saw a traumatic rupture in the traditional religious fabric, when Akhenaten suddenly removed royal patronage from the old cults in favor of his sun-disc worship.

For comparison with New Kingdom Egypt, I have chosen the Han dynasty of China, specifically the Western Han period. The founding of the Han also

marked a time of reunification after a period of civil war and division, following the collapse of the crucial but short-lived Qin dynasty. As in New Kingdom Egypt, the Han built their state by drawing on ideological models from a millennium of past dynasties, with writers such as Sima Qian consciously reflecting on the triumphs and failures of the past. Also paralleling New Kingdom Egypt, Han China marched well outside its traditional boundaries and discovered a world of other political actors. Economically, Han China built on the foundations of the centralized Qin and established a vast cash-based economy with flourishing commerce and domestic and international trade. While “modernists” at the Han court embraced the imperial expansion and the potential of the market economy to increase state power, conservatives resisted mightily, arguing that China was abandoning its economic and moral foundations. In the religious sphere, Han China also saw several popular movements that sought to democratize the afterlife, with cults such as that of the Queen Mother of the West promising salvation of the soul and a postmortem immortality in paradise to regular people.

In the seven case studies that follow, we sometimes must extend our discussion slightly beyond the chronological bounds of New Kingdom Egypt or Han dynasty China, because cultural phenomena do not always coincide precisely with political developments or dynastic turnover. So, in the discussion of tomb models and figurines, the evidence for Egypt spans the entire duration of pharaonic civilization, but reaches its climax during the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties of the Middle Kingdom from which we draw most of our evidence. Similarly, for the discussion of ritual board games, the discussion is expanded to include the development of these games in the preceding centuries.

The book is thematically divided into two parts. The first focuses mostly on the concerns of the above-ground world, such as environment, empire, politics, law, and administration. The second part looks to the realm of the afterlife, which for many people in Egypt and China was of even greater concern than the world of the living.

We flow into [chapter 1](#) on the currents of the Nile and the Yellow River, the mighty rivers that formed the lifeblood of the two civilizations. The comparative analysis is structured around three notions of landscape: the physical landscape of the river and its relationship to agriculture, the political landscape of the river and its connection to the rise and fall of dynasties, and the ritual landscape of the river, specifically how the personalities of the spiritual powers that animated both rivers were conditioned by the nature of their flooding patterns.

[Chapter 2](#) explores diplomacy in the empires established in Central Asia by the Han dynasty and in the Levant by the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt. Each originally conquered far-flung territories to serve as a military buffer, but these possessions also helped secure conduits for tributary import of luxury goods as well as gift and trade export of other products and metropolitan culture. In both cases, the most distant territories were controlled through a system of vassal states, rather than through colonization or direct military occupation. The chapter explores the diplomacy that Egypt and China engaged in with other peer polities in their respective regions, as well as with their vassal state clients, focusing on the role of envoys and written correspondence, gift giving,

marriage alliances, and resource-focused diplomacy.

Chapter 3 attempts to break new ground with a comparative examination of two notorious rulers: Akhenaten, “the heretic king” of Egypt, and Wang Mang, the idealistic Confucian and vilified usurper of the Han throne. Each attempted to reform a troubled mature empire, based on a fervent fundamentalist belief, and they signaled these changes to the population with a desacralization of the old order and visual signifiers of a new order. When their reforms failed, each man was vilified after his death and erased from the legitimate succession, but in ways that were specific to the Egyptian and Chinese ritual and historiographic traditions.

Chapter 4 compares the legal principles of New Kingdom Egypt and Han dynasty China, as manifested in excavated legal cases involving the violation of royal tombs, the application of private and criminal law at the local level, the prosecution of fornication, and the enactment of wills. Similarities that are apparent in the treatment of certain heinous crimes, such as the violation of royal tombs, are based on the common goals of dynastic states. However, the greatly divergent treatment of crimes of fornication and adultery allows us to glimpse not only the different values of each culture, but also the nature and extent of state control and penetration into local society.

Chapter 5 is a comparative analysis of official scribes in ancient Egypt and early China. An elaborate scribal culture was a strong parallel development between the two civilizations. These male scribes were trained to form the literate bureaucracy of the state and execute its principle functions of taxation, control of property and production, management of the population, and administration of law. This group saw itself as a privileged one in both societies. The second part of the chapter begins our transition into the second part of the book, as it delves into the burials of scribes. Both Egyptian and Chinese scribes and their descendants placed items in the tomb to mark their identity, profession, and status, distinguishing their tombs from those of other groups in society and perpetuating their self-perception of holding a special status.

Chapter 6 continues our *katabasis* into the underworld with a comparative study of tomb models and figurines. Some tombs in Middle Kingdom Egypt and Han China were outfitted with elaborate, three-dimensional tomb models and tableaux depicting scenes of food and cloth production, offering-bearers, servants, warrior figures, modes of transportation, architectural spaces, and scenes of entertainment. The study uncovers remarkable similarities between Egypt and China in terms of the function and range of models and figurines and the class of owners who buried them in their tombs. This chapter also compares the models from Egypt and China in terms of materiality, scale, and framing, in order to understand ancient hierarchies of value and specific ritual expressions, moving beyond a basic understanding of the models as representations or substitutes.

To conclude our journey, **chapter 7** arrives in paradise, specifically a comparison of the concept and representations of postmortem paradises in ancient Egypt and early China. The notion of a paradise for the worthy, accessed through personal piety, ethical conduct, or ritual knowledge, emerged at a particular historical moment in the development of each of these civilizations, manifesting a general desire for salvation and immortality. These

expressions would have a lasting impact on the development of paradisiacal realms in the later universal religions of Christianity and Buddhism. After a brief introduction to the nature of the soul and the geography of the afterlife in each civilization, the chapter explores the features and iconography of the paradisaical Marsh of Reeds in Egypt and the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West on Mount Kunlun in China, as revealed in texts and illustrations. A special comparative focus centers on certain ritual board games (*senet* and *liubo*) that could assist the deceased in attaining entrance to paradise.

Since this book follows a case-study approach, it is not my intention to make grand civilization-level comparisons or generalizations. But in a brief epilogue, I suggest certain broad historical causes and patterns that can explain some of the similarities and differences revealed in the seven case studies. I also advocate for others to continue the work of Egypt and China comparison with a substantial list of comparable features that could be explored in future works.

The Landscapes of the Nile and Yellow River

Civilization could have never arisen in Egypt or China without a generous supply of water, the lifeblood of all archaic states. As the Nile flowed northward through the Egyptian desert, flooding its banks in a fashion that was relatively benevolent and somewhat predictable, the Yellow River surged eastward through semiarid northern China, laden with fertile silt but prone to violent flooding and extreme course changes.

In the first half of the twentieth century, historical sociologist Karl Wittfogel (1896–1988) developed an influential and controversial theory concerning what he called “hydraulic civilizations.”¹ For Wittfogel, the early hydraulic civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and highland Mexico were characterized by their setting in an arid or semiarid landscape next to a large body of water. He theorized that political centralization first arose in these areas to overcome a problem of labor organization, for he believed that only strong leadership could bring together the manpower needed to build and maintain the large-scale works of irrigation and flood control that could tame the bodies of water and make agriculture possible in these arid zones. Thus, water control was the “prime mover” that brought about the rise of the first states.² Wittfogel further argued that the states that arose in these areas were fundamentally different in nature from those decentralized states that arose in places like Iron Age Europe, which did not practice irrigation agriculture on any scale during antiquity. The states in China and Egypt were “Oriental despotisms,” characterized by dense populations, centralized political power, hierarchical social orders, elaborate bureaucracies, a command economy, and practical sciences, but lacking any internal checks on absolute power, such as

autonomous churches, knighthoods, or guilds. He saw them as static civilizations, without any kind of political evolution toward the type of democracy seen in places like Greece.

Wittfogel's theory was inspired by his work on later periods of Chinese history, when the state engineered massive waterworks like the Grand Canal and operated them through complex bureaucracies. He also studied the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia, where city-states maintained complex canal irrigation networks. However, when Wittfogel was writing, the archaeology of early states was in its nascent stages, and when his theories were later put to the test of the spade, they did not fair very well. Archaeology in Mesopotamia, Mexico, China, India, and Egypt has revealed that intensive agriculture and state formation developed in those areas before any large-scale irrigation works were attempted.³ There is evidence in Egypt and China, as we shall see, of some smaller-scale local or regional hydraulic works in the early dynastic periods, but nothing of the scale that would require the sort of massive labor organization or hydraulic-focused bureaucracies envisioned by Wittfogel. It thus appears that the larger works may have been more "the result, rather than the cause, of the growth of states."⁴

One scholar has characterized Wittfogel's theory as "discredited but tenacious."⁵ I would suggest that its tenacity is not only due to its elegance and simplicity, but also because Wittfogel's ideas still contain a kernel of validity that reveals something important about the nature of early states in places like China and Egypt. So, rather than "throwing out the baby with the irrigation water" and dismissing Wittfogel completely, maybe it is better to take a more contextualized comparative approach to examine the relationship between the river, hydraulic engineering, and the state in ancient Egypt and early China.⁶

The Physical Landscapes

Even though, as Wittfogel recognized, the physical landscape of each of the great river valleys that once cradled an early civilization shared some features in common—namely, a large, flood-prone body of water that traveled through arid or semiarid terrain—they were each a unique hydrologic system. And while one is reluctant to paint with the broad brush of the geographic determinist, the distinct ecological setting, flooding patterns, and agricultural regimes encouraged by the Yellow River and the Nile clearly had some influence on the nature of Egyptian and Chinese political and social formations, as well as on religious and philosophical thinking.

Reconstructing the ancient environments of the two rivers is quite difficult, however, as much has changed since antiquity. The rivers have repeatedly shifted course; coastlines have been extended through silt deposition; climate and rainfall patterns have changed; flora and fauna are appreciably different; and, of course, people have drastically modified the natural order of the rivers through millennia of hydraulic engineering. Despite this, scholars have still made progress in reconstructing the river environments based on references in ancient texts and art, archaeology of habitation sites, deep-coring samples, and satellite imagery.

The Nile River valley was originally carved deeply into the bedrock of the North African plateau about six million years ago by a vigorous north-flowing river. The bed of this canyon was subsequently backfilled with sediment carried by later rivers and marine incursions, up to a depth of five hundred meters in places, reaching its current configuration about 120,000 years ago.⁷ What gives the 6,670-kilometer-long river its distinctive hydrological nature—a relatively constant flow punctuated by a seasonally predictable flood—is the uniqueness of its combined sources. The White Nile originates from Lake Victoria in present-day Uganda and Tanzania and slowly flows north through the great wetlands (the Sudd) of South Sudan. It provides a fairly steady year-round flow to the main Nile (17 percent of its annual volume), since any seasonal downpours are buffered through the lake and swamp systems that drain evenly into it. The Blue Nile, which arises at Lake Tana on the Ethiopian highlands, is fed by the summer rains of the Indian monsoon system and joins the White Nile at Khartoum. The rains in Ethiopia provide a strong pulse of energy that scours the land, picking up a heavy sediment load, and causes the Nile to rise annually several meters in late summer and spill over its banks onto the land. The Nile has been called an “exotic river,” because it is fed by these distant watersheds and runs through a territory in which almost no rain falls, so seasonal and long-term variations in the flow of the Nile reflect environmental changes in Ethiopia and East Africa and not in Egypt itself.⁸

Technically, the total physical landscape of the Nile includes the main river valley itself, its delta branches along the Mediterranean Sea, and the Faiyum Depression (seventy kilometers southwest of Cairo), but our focus here is on the main stretch of the Nile between Aswan and Cairo ([map 1.1](#)). Compared to other great rivers of the world, the Nile was relatively narrow and deep. During pharaonic times the Nile was an average of five hundred to eight hundred meters wide and ten to twelve meters deep. It also flows rather slowly, since the elevation drop from Aswan to Cairo is only eighty-five meters. It has been characterized as occupying a “convex floodplain,” since the river channel is higher than the land on either side. Natural levees formed from suspended sediment contained the river on either side, rising to a height of about one to three meters above the flatlands behind them. Since prehistoric times, human settlements have favored these levees ([fig. 1.1](#)).

The classical pattern of the Nile flood has not been seen since the early nineteenth century because of the construction of early modern dams and sluice gates. The flood was mostly obstructed by the Aswan Low Dam (completed in 1902) and permanently halted by the Aswan High Dam of the 1960s. But before these man-made interventions, the river level would be at its lowest from April to June, then would rise during July in response to the rains in Ethiopia. Sometime in early August, the Nile would spill over low spots in the levees or through natural overflow channels. It would then spread out over the floodplain to either side, filling natural compartmentalized flood basins that measured about sixty to ninety square kilometers each, bounded by the vestiges of old levees from previous river courses ([fig. 1.1](#)).⁹ These basins filled one at a time as the flood moved north over a six-week period. The floodwaters, which usually measured about 0.5 to 2.5 meters deep, washed away the salts from the

soil and brought a fresh layer of fertile silt. They rose fairly slowly, so even a high flood would seldom lead to loss of animal or human life, and the settlements on the levee tops were usually safe in a normal year.¹⁰ The waters would remain on the land from mid-August to late September, by which time they had either evaporated, soaked into the soil, or receded into the lowered river.



Map 1.1. The Near East during the Late Bronze Age. Drawn by QZ Lau.

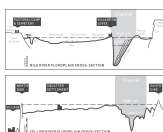


Figure 1.1. Floodplain cross-sections of the Nile and Yellow River. Redrawn by QZ Lau, after Butzer, "Nile." In Redford, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 2:544, and Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 4, part 3, 238, fig. 869.

The Nile has enjoyed a reputation since classical antiquity of being predictable and stable, but recent studies have shown that there were considerable short-term fluctuations and long-term variability in the flooding of the Nile and that the bed of the river has migrated over the last five millennia. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, before the Aswan High Dam ended the annual flooding, scholars had noted a periodic fluctuation in the Nile flood, following irregular nine- to seventeen-year cycles. This could be related to El Niño alternations, which affect the Indian monsoon cycle. In ancient times, such short-term variability could be foreseen and compensated for by storing surplus grain during years of plenty, but longer-term trends toward a dwindling flood, or decades of severely low Niles likely had an enormous economic and political impact, as discussed later.

Nile floods appear to have been consistently good during all but the final years of the First Dynasty (ca. 3050–2850 BCE), but dropped drastically during part of the Second Dynasty (ca. 2850–2670 BCE). According to later literary texts, during the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2168–2040 BCE), the river failed to flood at all for several years running. Then, during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2040–1656 BCE), there were several years of extremely high floods, 4.5 meters higher than normal, which could have washed away settlements and destroyed dikes. The New Kingdom (ca. 1548–1086 BCE) appears to have enjoyed a relatively stable Nile flood, but there was a steady

decline after 1200 BCE, culminating in disastrous low years during the troubled reign of Ramesses III (r. ca. 1195–1164 BCE).¹¹

The Nile is physically restricted in how much it can shift its course, for the upper and middle reaches of the floodplain are hemmed in by cliffs four to twelve kilometers apart (fig. 1.1). Nevertheless, scholars have shown that in many areas the Nile has migrated eastward across the valley by about five kilometers over the last several thousand years, though in some places, such as around modern Luxor, it appears to have actually migrated westward, leaving some sites that were once adjacent to the river stranded in the plain to the east.¹² Because of silt deposition, the valley floor has also risen about one centimeter per century, resulting in a wider valley.¹³ In the Delta, the massive deposition of silt, accumulating at about twenty centimeters per century, occasionally led to the silting up of certain branches of the Nile. For example, declining Nile floods during the Ramesside period led to the silting up of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile near the royal residence of Per-Ramesses around 1060 BCE (map 1.1), causing the Twenty-First Dynasty pharaohs to base their capital along another branch at Tanis.¹⁴

Egyptologists have long speculated that the physical landscape of the Nile strongly influenced the ancient Egyptian worldview. The annual resurgence of the Nile flooding, along with the daily death and rebirth of the sun, encouraged a cyclical notion of eternal time and the sense that death could be overcome by rebirth.¹⁵ It also may have facilitated the acceptance of the notion of divine kingship, which claimed to guarantee this regularity. The Nile was such a fixture in the minds of people that even the concept of rain, which fell in foreign lands but infrequently in Egypt, was viewed to be a “[Nile] inundation in the sky” for those places.¹⁶ The strong Egyptian sense of cultural identity and uniqueness, in opposition to foreigners, may have been fostered by the stark contrast between the fertile land adjacent to the Nile (and its associated agricultural lifestyle) and the surrounding desert, along with Egypt’s relative isolation from other core areas where early civilizations arose.¹⁷ The fertile Nile valley may also have given rise to the earliest notion of an afterlife paradisiacal realm, where the pleasures of Egyptian riverside life could continue indefinitely.

The Egyptian word for their geocultural realm was *kemet* (*km.t*), translated as the “Black Land.” Specifically, it denotes the dark alluvial land on either side of the Nile, in contrast with the “Red Land” of the desert, but it became a literary metaphor for the entire civilized land under the control of the divine king of Upper and Lower Egypt, an “imagined community” with shared values.¹⁸ While The Black Land was used to refer to this domain of Egyptian culture, the political designation for “the state” in ancient Egypt will be discussed in the epilogue.

THE YELLOW RIVER

The Yellow River (Huanghe; known in early China simply as He, “River”), the world’s sixth-longest at 5,464 kilometers, assumed its present form around one hundred thousand years ago. It arises on the Tibetan Plateau, a few hundred kilometers from the source of the other great river of China, the Yangzi (map 1.2).¹⁹ This source area only provides 40 percent of the river’s eventual volume,

however, for it continues to absorb tributaries along its upper and middle reaches, where it is strongly affected by local summer rainfall, driven by the East Asian monsoon. This situation contrasts sharply with the Nile, where nearly all of its flow originates in Ethiopia or in central Africa, and it is only influenced by rainfall conditions in those places.



Map 1.2. Han Dynasty China and the Western Regions. Drawn by QZ Lau.

Along its upper reaches, in present-day Gansu, the Yellow River flows rapidly through steep gorges, then turns northward to traverse an enormous loop (the Ordos). When it runs into the Shanxi massif and turns south again, it enters the Chinese Loess Plateau, which is where the river picks up nearly all its silt. This vast area, comprising most of modern Shaanxi and parts of Shanxi, Henan, and Gansu, contains deep loess deposits (one to two hundred meters), which were blown in during the last ice age. Unless held in place by vegetation, the loess soil is easily eroded, and local rainfall results in gullies of muddy water coursing toward the Yellow River. After traversing this area, the river contains as much as 1.6 billion tons of silt, seven times the silt load of the Mississippi. There is some evidence that the Chinese Loess Plateau was once covered with a protective layer of bushes and trees, but these were denuded by pre-industrial development after 500 BCE, leading to severe erosion. The earliest surviving official measurement of Yellow River silt content dates from 1 BCE, during the late Western Han period, when one minister reported that the river held as much as 60 percent silt.²⁰

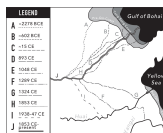
When the Yellow River emerges from the Chinese Loess Plateau, it is joined by the Wei River, near present-day Xi'an, then turns east and soon spills out onto the broad North China Plain, which at four hundred thousand square kilometers is larger than the entire Nile River valley. Since most of the North China Plain stands less than fifty meters above sea level, the river here flows slowly (only 12 percent of the Mississippi's discharge rate) and has no natural channel, unlike the Nile with its delimiting cliffs to either side. Between the Yellow River and the sea stands the Shandong massif, which fatefully compels the river to choose an exit either to its north or south.

Because of the slow flow, about one-third of the suspended silt ends up precipitating onto the bed of the Yellow River before it reaches the delta or the sea, leading to an aggradation of about two to three centimeters per year (the Nile bed rose only one centimeter per *century*). Natural levees form on either side of this bed, and since at least the late Bronze Age, humans have reinforced these levees into artificial dikes. This gradual rising of the riverbed has led to the bizarre outcome that in some places, such as near Zhengzhou in Henan, the current river bed sits as much as ten meters above the surrounding plain ([fig 1.1](#)), held in place by towering dikes. Such a situation makes it impossible for

the Yellow River to absorb any local tributaries, making it basically like a Roman aqueduct.²¹ Recall that the Nile is also a convex river, but at most flows only two meters above the surrounding floodplain. This situation makes any flooding that overtops or ruptures the Yellow River dikes far more disastrous than a Nile flood, for the water pours downhill as from a waterfall with cataclysmic force. Eventually, nothing can withstand the force of the river in its rising bed, and these dikes will be overtopped, leading to disastrous flooding and a new river course.

We noted above that the Nile had gradually migrated about five kilometers east over a period of millennia. This movement seems almost negligible compared to the dramatic shifts of the Yellow River, which has several times in recorded history swung about like an untended garden hose, shifting its course by many hundreds of kilometers in a matter of days after a major dike rupture. Specifically, the lower course of the Yellow River has shifted twenty-five times in the last 2,500 years, and eight of those course changes have been major ones that led to the deaths of millions of people, with incalculable damage to infrastructure and agriculture ([map 1.3](#)).²²

The major shifts in the Yellow River channel seem to correlate with periods of deforestation and population pressure upstream. The first major shift of the imperial era occurred between 14 and 17 CE, after the great economic expansion of the Warring States (453–221 BCE), Qin (221–207 BCE), and Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE) periods, when massive deforestation for agriculture and charcoal led to huge silt loads in the Yellow River. The next great shift came during the Song dynasty, following the booming years of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE).²³



Map 1.3. Historical Courses of the Yellow River. Drawn by QZ Lau.

We can personalize the plight of the Chinese peasant, farming in the shadow of the towering Yellow River dikes, by looking at the deeply buried Han village site at Sanyangzhuang, “China’s Pompeii,” in Neihuang County, Henan ([map 1.2](#)).²⁴ The site was occupied by farmers during the Late Neolithic (ca. 2000 BCE) and again during the Warring States period, and each habitation was obliterated by a massive flood. In the mid–Western Han period (ca. 132 BCE), settlers returned to the site and built a village right atop the buried remains of the Warring States–era settlement, only ten to twenty kilometers east of the ominous raised bed of the Yellow River, “on the margins of catastrophe.”²⁵ Excavations at the site revealed a prosperous Han village, covering more than a hectare, with at least fifteen spacious residential compounds (up to 130 square meters, of three to six rooms) with tiled roofs, surrounded by cultivated mulberry trees, wells, latrines, kilns, agricultural fields, and a road system. Then, without warning, on a late summer day sometime between 14 and 17 CE,

the Yellow River broke its banks and inundated the site in a massive flood, eventually covering Sanyangzhuang and a vast surrounding area of 18,000 square kilometers with up to three meters of sediment.²⁶ While no skeletons of persons killed by the flood have been excavated yet, it is clear that the residents of Sanyangzhuang had to drop everything they were doing and flee for their lives. Valuable metal vessels and agricultural tools were simply left in place, and a pile of unused roof tiles lay at the ready for a repair project. A scattering of human footprints in the mud may indicate the final scramble to harvest some grain and search for higher ground. It would be several centuries until the site was occupied again by farmers.

Speculative as all such observations must be, it seems plausible that the precarious nature of agriculture on the North China Plain, with the ever-present threat of floods, drought, locusts, and famine, may have helped generate a worldview that was both insecure and controlling. Insecurity about the Yellow River and North China agriculture may have helped to foster an almost obsessive-compulsive drive in the early Chinese state, manifested through its bureaucracy, to control and categorize every aspect of the world that could be controlled. In David Keightley's words, the bureaucratic impulse was "China's stay against confusion."²⁷ Economically, this same insecurity led to a strong antimerchant bias, for we see that preimperial and imperial texts repeatedly stressed that agriculture was the "root occupation" of the people, and that merchants and artisans were parasites who endangered the food supply. At the local level, there has been a strong focus throughout Chinese history on saving for future disasters and on systems of family mutual assistance. In the religious imagination, the insecurity of agriculture and the precariousness of life may have helped foster the "religion of personal welfare" that emphasized attracting good luck and avoiding misfortune.²⁸ Finally, while Egypt may have developed a notion of a postmortem paradise so that people could continue the pleasures of this life, it is possible that the people of early China developed their own yearnings for salvation and paradise as a means to escape the hell of their world.

Earlier, we saw how the Egyptians referred to their geocultural realm as the Black Land, indicating the civilized lands on either side of the Nile. The Chinese cultural domain, in comparison, was called Tianxia (All under Heaven) and was much larger than just the Yellow River valley. It comprised all the lands of the civilized Chinese world, united by the First Emperor of Qin in 221 BCE, a realm bounded by shared values inherited from the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1045–256 BCE).²⁹

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

Given that no rain regularly falls in the Nile valley, agriculture in Egypt would not be possible without the Nile.³⁰ However, artificial irrigation with canals, like that seen in Mesopotamia, was not really necessary or practical in Egypt, because the natural irrigation provided by the annual Nile flood basically did all the work necessary to make the surrounding desert bloom.³¹ When the September flood overtopped the levees of the Nile, it spilled into natural flood basins to either side of the river, which were conveniently bounded into manageable compartments. When the waters receded or evaporated by late fall,

farmers could scatter emmer, barley, and flax seeds, and trample them under foot. Though the ground sometimes needed to be first broken up with a plow, the crops that grew during the winter months needed very little cultivation and no irrigation (because of the residual high water table), before finally being harvested in spring.

Archaeological inquiry has seriously undermined the theories of Karl Wittfogel as they apply to Egypt, for it is quite clear that the state in Egypt had already arisen before large-scale works of hydraulic engineering were undertaken to enhance this convenient system of natural irrigation. That being said, by the late Predynastic Period, there is visual and archaeological evidence that humans were seeking to modify and augment the natural system of irrigation to make the timing more beneficial, increase the land under cultivation, and improve crop yields. One of the first modifications appears to have been manually breaching the levees to initiate the flood according to the king's timing (and to make it appear on the king's initiative). A stone mace head (a symbol of royal power) from the reign of King Scorpion (ca. 3050 BCE) depicts the king wielding a special tool to make a ceremonial cut in a Nile levee, irrigating the land to make it flourish ([plate 1](#)).³² By the Third Dynasty (ca. 2670–2600 BCE), there appears to have been a regionally based system to manage the natural flood basins, and it may be no coincidence that the boundaries of traditional Egyptian nomes (provinces) correspond roughly to convenient groupings of such basins.³³ To adapt to years of lower-than-expected flood levels, Egyptians first deepened the natural overflow channels that led from the river into the basins, drawing away the water in feeder canals parallel to the Nile. Then, to further enhance the storage capacity and productivity of the irrigation basins, they heightened the natural transverse levees that divided them, making sure all the silt was laid down on the fields, before they opened sluice gates to drain them in a controlled manner. Based on analogy to later nineteenth-century practice, these measures would have been supervised locally and would not have required large-scale labor mobilization.³⁴ Raising water from the low-water Nile in individual buckets was impractical for large-scale agriculture, so the intensification of year-round artificial irrigation was not really possible in Egypt until the introduction of the water wheel during Ptolemaic times.³⁵

Contrasting the situation in Egypt, agriculture in north China would still be marginally possible without the Yellow River, and in fact, despite the benefits of the fertile loess silt it deposited after its dramatic flooding, the river was more of a menace than a blessing to the Chinese farmer. North China lies at the edge of the East Asian monsoon zone, where 80 percent of its total annual rainfall (twenty-five to fifty centimeters for the loess area, forty to seventy-five centimeters for the low plains), arrives in the three summer months.³⁶ It is technically considered a semiarid zone, but dryland farming is just barely possible. Slight variations in the monsoon pattern have frequently led to long, severe droughts in North China. The staple crop here, since at least 6500 BCE, was two drought-resistant species of millet, which were first cultivated on the loess highlands and were well-suited to this precarious climatic pattern.³⁷ If additional water was needed during the growing season, such as for vegetable plots, this could be acquired from wells. The unique system of ridges and furrows employed in the millet and wheat fields of North China also helped

make the most of what little rainfall fell.³⁸ Thus, irrigation was not really necessary for basic subsistence agriculture in North China during the Neolithic and early Bronze Age. Artificial irrigation was first employed in North China, as it was in Egypt, when the state wanted to increase the land under cultivation to augment its power and support a larger population. Thus, irrigation appears to have been the result of state formation, not its principal cause.

Major works of irrigation in China, such as the Zhengguo Canal or Dujiangyan diversion network (both described later), were not constructed until more than six thousand years after the development of agriculture and more than 1,500 years after primary state formation. Even the recently discovered Bronze Age irrigation canals of the Shang period were nowhere near the scale of those later works, and were still built hundreds of years after the first states in North China, failing to bolster Wittfogel's theory.³⁹

Even during the imperial period, the Yellow River was not a good candidate for irrigation networks. The river itself runs low during the actual growing season, when water might be welcome, and tends to flood at the absolute worst time, just before the harvest, which is what happened to the unfortunate village of Sanyangzhuang. The towering dikes also made it very impractical to divert any sort of manageable canal or aqueduct. Canals created specifically for irrigation during the late preimperial period and early empire focused on smaller tributaries of the Yellow River or the Yangzi, avoiding the unmanageable mega-rivers.

The Political Landscapes

“How tremendous are the benefits brought by the rivers, and how terrible the damages!”

—SIMA QIAN, *Shi ji* (ca. 95 BCE)

The physical landscape of the two rivers was paralleled by a political landscape whose peaks and valleys were directly linked to the fortunes of the rivers. This landscape could be quite treacherous. Early states relied completely on agriculture for their “tax base,” and many people depended on the rivers for their livelihoods. When the rivers behaved as desired, this could greatly bolster the power of the state and lend legitimacy to its ruling ideology. But when the rivers failed to meet people's expectations, this placed the state under tremendous stress and could bring down a dynasty unable to adapt to the situation. Thus, the states of ancient Egypt and early China obsessively attempted to measure and document their rivers, to control them with hydraulic engineering, and to propitiate them with sacrifice, fully aware that the very survival of the state depended upon their actions.

DOCUMENTING THE RIVERS

The timing and maximum height of the Nile flood were important figures to know for the Egyptian state, because they determined when planting would begin and how much land would receive water for agriculture, thus determining the amount of tax assessments and boundaries of properties. The river height measurements took place in at least two locations, one well

upstream near where the flood was first detected (Elephantine Island near Aswan) and another closer to the capital at Memphis ([map 1.1](#)). They were sometimes marked on the wharf of a temple or on a stairway leading down to the Nile. In more remote places like Nubia, they might simply be a graffito at a high-water mark. We can assume that such measurements began as early as the formation of the Egyptian state, because fragments of a remarkable stone slab, known as the Palermo Stone, record the regnal years of many of the kings of the first five Egyptian dynasties, usually accompanied by a Nile flood height for each year.⁴⁰

While Nile flood-level markings survive from several periods of pharaonic Egypt, the actual recording installations are rarely mentioned in Egyptian texts. They are mentioned frequently in sources from Greco-Roman Egypt, however, where nearly every temple had one. The Greeks called them “nilometers” (νιλομετριον). The tradition of nilometers continued into medieval and early modern times, where fairly good readings survive from 622 CE onward.⁴¹

We know that the state in China was also very interested in the physical details of its rivers and canals and assigned officers to record heavy rains, floods, and droughts, and to note a river's depth, speed of flow, silt content, and the health of its dikes. These figures were submitted up the administrative hierarchy, recorded in official archives, and used in the planning of hydraulic policy. Drawing on this information, the earliest major historical works in imperial China, *Records of the Grand Scribe* (Shi ji) of Sima Qian and *History of the Han* (Han shu) of Ban Gu, each contain an entire treatise dedicated to the rivers and canals of the realm, documenting in chronological order the great flood control and irrigation projects of rulers and officials. Furthermore, in the chronicle chapters of each book, the authors draw from official archives to report each incident of flooding or dike rupture. Since this tradition of recording floods continued for nearly two thousand years in China, modern scholars have compiled these records to show that there have been 1,590 flooding events on the North China Plain in the past 2,540 years, or about two floods in every three years.⁴²

HYDRAULIC ENGINEERING

The states in China and Egypt sought to manipulate their major river through projects of hydraulic engineering to make them more predictable and beneficial. These efforts sought to use the river for irrigation, flood control, transportation, or a combination thereof, and could be organized at the local, regional, or statewide level. In the Chinese case, since artificial irrigation was not absolutely required for a baseline level of agricultural productivity on the North China Plain, works that attempted to control the Yellow River floods were usually prioritized over canals for transport or irrigation. For China, the problem with the Yellow River was always *too much water*, whereas for the Nile in Egypt, the greatest problem was *not enough water*.

Throughout Chinese history, two schools of thought developed concerning Yellow River policy. The first has been characterized as the Daoist school, which advocated letting (or assisting) the Yellow River to find the most natural channel to the sea. The other school, often called Confucian, argued that it was the state's responsibility to safeguard the lives and livelihood of the common

farmer and that it should mobilize all its resources to contain the Yellow River within its current banks by reinforcing the dikes to progressively higher levels.⁴³ Each group tried to base its policy suggestions on the precedents of antiquity and claimed to be following the methods of Yu the Great, the legendary Xia dynasty founder and the first “hydraulic engineer.”

When the Yellow River violently broke through its banks at Huzi in 132 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han listened to his chief minister Tian Fen, who argued that the flood was an “act of Heaven” and that the state should not interfere with the river finding its own course. Twenty years later, after crop failures and famine, the sovereign changed his mind and ordered tens of thousands of laborers to repair the breach at any cost. He personally went to inspect the work, sacrificing jades and a live horse to the river spirit, the Earl of the Yellow River. Eventually, even officials like Sima Qian personally hauled materials to fill the gap.⁴⁴ The goal of the more proactive (Confucian) approach of shoring up and heightening the dikes was to maintain economic and political stability, but it was also a “technological and managerial lock-in,” because in order to delay the inevitable catastrophe from the rising riverbed, the state was required to invest ever-greater resources into hydraulic maintenance, thereby weakening its fiscal situation.⁴⁵

Now, let us survey two famous hydraulic works from early China, one in the south designed for flood control as well as irrigation, and one in the north designed solely for irrigation. The Dujiangyan diversion and canal network, located about fifty kilometers northwest of present-day Chengdu, Sichuan, is one of the greatest hydraulic works of early China and is still in use today ([map 1.2](#)). When the Qin conquered the kingdom of Shu in 316 BCE and founded a new provincial capital at Chengdu, safety and agricultural productivity were hampered by the Min River, a tributary of the Yangzi, which was prone to silting up and flooding onto the Chengdu Plain. The Qin governor Li Bing (and supposedly his son Li Erlang) completed the project between about 277 and 250 BCE. The Dujiangyan system was not a dam or dike, but a diversion system that provided both flood control and artificial irrigation. *Records of the Grand Scribe* of Sima Qian and the regional history *Account of the Kingdoms South of Mount Hua* (Huayang guozhi) both mention the project and Li Bing’s appointment as governor (disagreeing on the dates),⁴⁶ but do not describe the technical details, which have been provided by later hydraulic engineers and historians.⁴⁷ Li Bing first placed a large division-head made of piled stones in the middle of the Min River, dividing the flow. While the outer channel progressed to the Yangzi River as before, the diverted inner channel was fed toward an artificial cut through a mountain and into an irrigation network of side canals that eventually irrigated forty-six thousand hectares of land, making Shu Province the populous breadbasket of the Qin and Han empires. There is a later tradition in *Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores* (Fengsu tongyi; ca. 195 CE) by Ying Shao, which relates how Li Bing first had offered to propitiate the deity of the flood-prone river by giving two of his daughters “in marriage,” but then proceeded to do battle with a proxy bull of the spirit in order to tame the river.⁴⁸ By as early as the Han dynasty, a shrine had been established at the site to honor Li Bing, and a monumental inscribed stone statue of him, dated 168 CE, originally used as a “nilometer,” was unearthed there in 1974.⁴⁹

The second great feat of hydraulic engineering of the late Warring States period in China was so significant that the Han historian Sima Qian credits it with helping the Qin state to become rich and powerful enough to conquer its neighbors and unify China. This is the Zhengguo Canal (Zhengguo Qu), completed around 246 BCE ([map 1.2](#)). The land to the north of the Qin capital of Xianyang on the Wei River was said to be alkaline and unproductive. The rival state of Han knew that the Qin were fond of ambitious projects, so they sent a hydraulic engineer named Zheng Guo as a spy to undermine the Qin by burdening them with a proposed project to connect two tributaries of the Wei River, the Jing and the Luo, with a 125-kilometer-long artificial canal that could irrigate the subpar land with its silt-laden waters. Halfway through the project, the Qin king uncovered the ruse and wanted to execute Zheng Guo, but Zheng convinced the king that his project would genuinely benefit the realm. According to Sima Qian's slightly exaggerated numbers, the canal eventually irrigated 184,000 hectares of land, which yielded bumper crops of as much 2,777 liters of grain per hectare.⁵⁰ Over the last two thousand years, the canal had to be recut multiple times, moving further northward, but a related system is still in use today.⁵¹

Another type of "hydraulic engineering" employed in China was far more destructive than constructive. Because of the devastating potential of the Yellow River and other major waterways, generals from the Eastern Zhou period up to the twentieth century have been tempted to use them as weapons of mass destruction against their enemies. This could take the form of breaching levees or diverting a river toward an enemy city to dissolve its defensive walls and drown its inhabitants, or diverting a river away from a city to parch it. Such practices were also common in ancient Mesopotamia, where one state could starve out a rival by diverting its water supply or destroying its canals, but there is no evidence that such tactics were ever employed during civil wars in Egypt.⁵²

During the Warring States period in China, water warfare was a favorite tactic of the ruthless generals of Qin. In 279 BCE, in a campaign against the major Chu city of Yan, General Bai Qi diverted a river toward the town, killing tens of thousands of people.⁵³ In 225 BCE, General Wang Ben diverted the Yellow River to break through the walls of the Wei capital of Daliang, inducing its total surrender.⁵⁴ Sometimes, unleashing the Yellow River as a weapon of war could have terrible unintended consequences, such as in 1938, when in a desperate move to inhibit the advancing Japanese army, the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek ordered the destruction of the Yellow River dikes at Huayuankou in Henan. The move did not substantially hinder the Japanese advance, but unleashed a catastrophic flood that drowned an estimated five hundred thousand to one million Chinese as collateral damage.⁵⁵

The Egyptian hydraulic projects of pharaonic times that enhanced the natural irrigation basins of the Nile did significantly alter the landscape, but they appear to have been organized at the local and regional level, and did not require the type of statewide labor mobilizations seen with the major Chinese works of hydraulic engineering like the Zhengguo Canal. That is not to say that the Egyptian state was not powerful enough to carry out such a major project, for the Great Pyramids will forever stand as irrefutable proof of such capability. And while the evidence from pharaonic Egypt may not reveal as many colossal

hydraulic projects as we see in early China, there is one particular case during the Middle Kingdom that demands our attention, and that is in the Faiyum.

The Faiyum is a crescent-shaped depression, fifty-three meters below sea level, covering eighteen thousand square kilometers, located about seventy kilometers southwest of Cairo. Since around forty thousand years ago, it had been connected to the Nile River valley by a side branch of the Nile called today the Bahr Yussef (Waterway of Joseph). During the inundation season, some of the floodwaters of the Nile would flow into the depression, forming an inland lake that in classical sources was called Lake Moeris ([map 1.1](#)). During the Old Kingdom, it appears that this lake and its marshland was primarily utilized for hunting and fowling, not for agriculture. During the dramatic low Nile floods of the First Intermediate Period, it appears from archaeological coring samples that the Bahr Yussef filled with wind-blown sand, and the Nile no longer flowed into Lake Moeris.⁵⁶

During the Twelfth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom, Senwosret II (r. ca. 1896–1887 BCE), Senwosret III (r. ca. 1887–1848 BCE), and Amenemhat III (r. ca. 1868–1822 BCE) undertook major projects to reclaim the Faiyum for settlement and cultivation. First, they dredged and broadened the Bahr Yussef into an artificial canal, which allowed the flood waters of the Nile to once again flow into the lake. Then, they built one of the world's first diversion dam and sluice gate systems (broadly similar to the Dujiangyan in China) at the point where the Bahr Yussef channel of the Nile nears the Faiyum, at the site of el-Lahun ([map 1.1](#)). The earthen dam and sluice gates at el-Lahun allowed the Egyptians to control how much water would flow into the Faiyum and how much would continue north to rejoin the Nile. Recall that the Twelfth Dynasty was characterized by some incredibly high Nile floods, as much as 4.5 meters above the normal level, and this level of flooding could have jeopardized the new capital of Itjtawy (southwest of Memphis). During a high flood, the water managers could divert some of the flow into the lake to protect the capital downstream, and during a normal year, they could close off the flow to the lake, allowing evaporation to lower the lake level, opening up more land for cultivation on its margins. It is estimated that this practice led to an additional 8,500 hectares of new royally controlled agricultural land in the Faiyum. Senwosret II and Amenemhat III reinforced the importance of this newly developed land by building their impressive pyramids (with their associated pyramid towns), mortuary temples, and colossal royal statues in the area, which had previously not been used for such monuments. It appears that high floods at the end of the Middle Kingdom destroyed the waterworks at el-Lahun. The focus of land reclamation and capital construction would shift during the New Kingdom (especially during the Nineteenth Dynasty) to the Delta, and the Faiyum retreated into obscurity until the Ptolemaic period, when two dams would be built at el-Lahun with stronger materials, and waterwheels and other forms of artificial irrigation would prompt accelerated development in the Faiyum that continued into the Roman period.

THE RIVERS, LEGITIMATION, AND DYNASTIC DECLINE

In ancient Egypt and early China, the agricultural prosperity of the country, and thus the strength of the state, was intimately related to the rise and fall of

the Nile and the Yellow River. The connection between the river and the ruler was even stronger, for the very legitimacy of the monarch seems to have been dependent on his ability to “control the waters.”

In the ancient Egyptian worldview, the king was supposed to maintain justice, order, and stability in the world, or *maat* (*m3ˁ.t*), through his ritual actions and the power of his embodied divinity. As we shall see in [chapter 4](#), that meant guaranteeing that justice and truth prevailed in the legal realm, but also that foreigners at the frontiers were kept at bay, and that the seasons progressed normally, with the Nile flooding just the right amount. The annual Nile flood was thought to reenact perpetually the creation of the world, when a primeval hill first emerged from the receding primordial waters. This annual rebirth was personified in the myth of Osiris, and so, as the embodiment of Horus, the son of Osiris, the king was thought to guarantee this cycle and bring forth the Nile inundation.⁵⁷ Thus, the success or failure of the king was materially and ideologically tied to the Nile.

Records indicate that a new Egyptian king ascended the throne either in late summer, to be in conjunction with the coming of the Nile inundation, or in autumn, to accord with the recession of waters and the sowing of new crops.⁵⁸ The notations of the height of the Nile flood on the Palermo Stone, attached to each regnal year of early kings, also imply a connection between a good flood year with the success of the king. In the earliest ritual texts to survive, the “Pyramid Texts” of King Unas (r. ca. 2380–2350 BCE) of the Old Kingdom, the king was said to embody the Nile flood, proclaiming, “It is Unas who inundates the land.”⁵⁹ Moreover, several Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom texts proclaim that the king had the ability to make the Nile “act as his servant.”⁶⁰ The predictability of the Nile flood probably played a central role in the development of the notion of divine kingship in Egypt, inspiring people’s confidence in his power to regulate the cosmos.⁶¹ The king sometimes performed elaborate rituals beseeching the spirit of the Nile inundation to come forth. However, if for several years running these rituals were ineffective, the king’s illegitimacy would be only too apparent. It could be that the demotion of the pharaoh to nondivine status at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty (1198–1086 BCE) and the rise to power of the High Priests of Amun was related to the low Nile floods that occurred throughout the Nineteenth Dynasty, accompanied by incursions of foreigners.⁶²

Like the Egyptian king, the Chinese emperor coordinated his actions with the patterns of nature, to accord with and reinforce the order of the universe. He ascended the throne on the Lunar New Year (on a day between January 21 and February 20). He also ceremonially broke the earth with a plow on a date during the first or second lunar month to signal the beginning of the agricultural year. But unlike in Egypt, where the Nile flood was relatively predictable and comforting, the flooding of the Yellow River in China was neither foreseeable nor welcome, so the emperor did not identify with this violent act of the natural forces, but actively sought to prevent it. In Chinese mythology, flooding was associated with chaos and the erasing of the critical distinctions among men, and between men and animals, that made civilization possible.⁶³ The sage king was the one who rescued the world from chaos and controlled the waters, like the culture hero and legendary Xia dynasty founder, Yu the Great.

In a series of memorials sent to the throne during the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 BCE), a thinker named Dong Zhongshu (ca. 179–104 BCE) promoted a philosophy that combined the ethical teachings of Confucius with a belief in the alternations of *yin* and *yang* and the “five phases,” tying the world of nature even more closely to the sovereign.⁶⁴ He stated that there was correlative resonance between Heaven, man, and the ruler, since man’s nature was modelled after Heaven, and the ruler was Heaven’s mandated representative on earth. When the people were suffering under a failed monarch, Heaven would respond to this disorder by sending a warning to the ruler through deviations in the natural order. Thus, aberrations like eclipses, earthquakes, and floods were messages from Heaven that the emperor was wanting in virtue and that the administration of the empire was amiss. This notion gave Confucian ministers leverage to rein in immoral or indifferent emperors, who were sometimes compelled to mend their ways. It also led to more proactive hydraulic engineering, for while an emperor who was worried about his heavenly report card could do nothing to physically prevent eclipses or earthquakes, he could certainly reinforce the dikes on the Yellow River to avoid an omen of Heaven’s displeasure.

Dong Zhongshu’s rhetoric gained greater currency a century after his death. For example, let us examine the words of Gu Yong (d. 8 BCE), a Confucian scholar during the reign of Emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 BCE). When asked by the court about recent flooding along the Yellow River, he responded in a memorial:

The Yellow River is the main artery of the Middle Kingdom. When a sage king arises, then the [Yellow River] divulges the *Diagram of the Yellow River*, [and the Luo River] divulges its *Scripture of the Luo River*, [with their profound cosmic symbols]. When the Kingly Way is discarded, then [these books of Heavenly omens] are cut off. Nowadays, [the dikes of the Yellow River] collapse and water flows everywhere, even submerging the mountains and hills. This is a seriously bad omen. If the governance of the empire is corrected to respond to this, then the disaster will disappear by itself.⁶⁵

Gu Yong believed that the floods, earthquakes, eclipses, and other recent calamities were warnings from Heaven regarding the moral failings of the emperor, who had become obsessed with his court women and neglected the administration of the empire, while still failing to produce a male heir. Thus, there was a gendered component to his criticism, for severe floods were an omen that there was too much *yin* (or female energy) at court, referring to the influence of Empress Zhao Feiyan and her sister upon the emperor’s attention. Gu believed that if the emperor returned to the proper course, Heaven would respond by ending the flooding.

Since the function of the great rivers was so intimately tied to the legitimation of the king in China and in Egypt, as well as to the economic strength of the state, it makes sense that extreme river disasters could contribute to the downfall of a dynasty. In Egypt, this disastrous situation occurred when the Nile flood was too low or failed entirely, due to cessation of the monsoon rains over Ethiopia. In China, by contrast, the greatest disaster was too much water, as heavy summer monsoon rains and silt loads burst the

dikes of the Yellow River, drowning the land. Of course, avoiding natural disasters completely was impossible in either case, but a healthy and adaptable state could survive the occasional “once in a decade” type of disaster through adequate stores of grain or large-scale hydraulic mitigation, whereas a corrupt or inefficient state would likely fail.

One such period of extreme stress caused by low Nile flooding appears to have occurred just after the long reign of Pepy II (r. ca. 2290–2200 BCE) of the Sixth Dynasty, and included the First Intermediate Period. Contemporary inscriptions, like those of the nomarch Ankhtify (ca. 2100 BCE), and the “lament literature” of the subsequent Middle Kingdom, such as *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, report a time of catastrophic famine and social dislocation, caused by repeated failures of the Nile flood.⁶⁶ This aberration of twenty to thirty years of Nile flood failures has been at least partially confirmed by archaeology and may have been part of a global climatic event (ca. 2200–2100 BCE),⁶⁷ where long-term aridity seems to have contributed to the downfall of several states, including the Akkadian empire in Mesopotamia.⁶⁸ According to the Egyptian literary sources, it led to crop failure and famine, cannibalism, disruption of the social hierarchy, infiltration by Asiatics, and anarchy. Rulership during this period was chaotic and ephemeral, as dozens of obscure monarchs came and went, unable to unify the country or convince a starving people of their divine authority, since they were unable to coax the Nile to return to the land.

A comparable period of hydraulic catastrophe in Chinese history occurred early in Wang Mang’s reign, when the Yellow River broke its dikes between 3 and 5 CE, again in 11 CE, and then again between 14 and 17 CE, the last time drowning the prosperous village of Sanyangzhuang. These floods inundated several provinces, causing massive famine and dislocation. Eventually, the starving peasants in Shandong formed a rebel army called the Red Eyebrows, strong enough to defeat an imperial army. After they joined forces with restorationists from Nanyang, they marched on the capital and killed Emperor Wang Mang.⁶⁹ Had Wang Mang’s regime not been so corrupt and unpopular, and his Xin dynasty economy less chaotic and more adaptable, his dynasty might have survived the Yellow River course changes, just as the Northern Song dynasty survived the catastrophic course change in the mid-eleventh century CE.⁷⁰

The Ritual Landscapes

The life-giving force and awesome power of the Nile and the Yellow River were abstracted by the people of ancient Egypt and early China into two divine powers, which became more concrete and personified over time and whose different personalities mirrored their hydrological natures. The nature of these two powers, and the types of rituals directed at them, appear to be projections of the people’s attitudes toward the natural environment and their place within it.

THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE YELLOW RIVER (HE)

In the earliest religious texts preserved from China, the oracle-bone divinations

of the late Shang dynasty (ca. 1300–1045 BCE), the animating force of the Yellow River was referred to by the same name as the river itself, He.⁷¹ Relevant inscriptions suggest that the Yellow River was considered a “power,” and not a “spirit” or “god,” for even though it did have influence over the lives of men and could be propitiated through sacrifice, it was not part of a separate spirit world or pantheon.⁷²

The Yellow River’s power could be beneficent, and had some control over the outcome of agriculture, for we see inscriptions where sacrifices were made to it seeking rainfall or a bountiful harvest.⁷³ But the power of the Yellow River could also be capricious and dangerous. Inscriptions specifically mention worries about the power harming the harvest grain, divining, “It is the Yellow River power who is harming the grain [harvest].”⁷⁴

The Shang king was deeply concerned about flooding along the Huan River, the tributary that bisected his capital city,⁷⁵ but he also worried about drought, which could be caused when a rainbow (seen as a two-headed dragon) dipped one of its heads into the nearby Yellow River and drank heavily.⁷⁶ The Yellow River power may have been under the monarchical authority of the high god Di, who was able to command other natural powers like the winds and rain.⁷⁷

It appears that sacrifices to the Yellow River power took place both at the capital, where the power was attracted by the smoke of burnt offerings and invited as a guest, and at special shrines near the river itself, which at the time was located about sixty-five kilometers from the Shang capital. Sometimes, the king appears to have traveled there in person to perform the sacrifice:

- a) Crack-making on *yiyou* day (day 22), Bin divined: “[We] should send men to the Yellow River power, [ritually] drown three sheep, pledge three bovines.” Third moon.⁷⁸
- b) If the king goes to make a libation sacrifice at/to the Yellow River power, there will not be approval.⁷⁹

David Keightley cautions that we must not see the Shang attitude toward the Yellow River and the other powers of nature as one of simple awe and reverence, but rather as one of intended “dominance and caution,” where the king carried out a concerted attempt to not only predict, but also to “order and dominate the arena of natural forces.”⁸⁰ If the dynasty merely submitted to the capricious natural world, Keightley argues, this “would have been tantamount to extinction.”⁸¹ But the Yellow River power was awesome and frightful, and frequently demonstrated its power through flooding and killing. During the Shang and later dynasties, sometimes only human sacrifice could appease it.

The Yellow River power is not frequently mentioned in texts from the subsequent Zhou period (ca. 1045–256 BCE), but a story recorded in *Zuo Tradition* (Zuozhuan) demonstrates its influence had spread beyond the Yellow River area and into the Yangzi River valley. In 489 BCE, the king of the southern state of Chu was gravely ill, and his diviners told him the Yellow River power was to blame. The king refused to offer sacrifice to the power, believing he was safe from its malign influence in his faraway kingdom. That he subsequently perished demonstrated the great reach of the Yellow River power.⁸²

At some point during the early Warring States period, the spiritual power of the Yellow River was personified (or became conflated with) the masculine figure of the Earl of the Yellow River (He Bo). His cult became highly elaborated, and popular legends about him endured for centuries across much of China. Some texts and commentaries say the Earl of the Yellow River was originally a man from Huayin County (in present-day Shaanxi) named Feng Yi, who drowned in the Yellow River and was transformed into the river spirit.⁸³ According to *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shanhaijing), the Earl of the Yellow River had the face of a man and rode a pair of dragons.⁸⁴ In other textual and visual representations, he rides a white turtle or a quadriga of fishes, and his lower body resembles a serpent or octopus (fig. 1.2). According to one poem, the Earl of the Yellow River lived in an underwater palace, with private chambers covered in fish scales and public halls adorned in dragon scales. Other palace buildings were made of pearls, with gate towers of enormous purple cowrie shells.⁸⁵

Sima Qian, in his *Records of the Grand Scribe*, records that during the late fifth century BCE, there was a tradition in the states of Wei and Qin in the north of regularly sacrificing a young virgin to become the Earl's consort, believing this was the only way to stop disastrous flooding. In his biography of Ximen Bao, the earliest hydraulic engineer we know of from the historical period, Sima Qian relates the particulars of the cult in great detail.



Figure 1.2. The Earl of the Yellow River, Eastern Han period (ca. 25–150 CE). Rubbing from a stone excavated from a tomb at Wang Zhuang village, Nanyang, Henan, China. After Zhongguo Huaxiangshi Quanjì Bianjǐ Weiyuanhui, ed., *Zhongguo huaxiangshi quanjì*, vol. 6, plate 155.

Ximen Bao was sent ca. 400 BCE to become the magistrate of Ye, in present-day Henan. He learned upon arrival that the district was rather poor and that many people had fled, because local officials levied exorbitant taxes annually to hire greedy ritual specialists who promised to placate the river deity. These specialists would appropriate a beautiful young girl from some poor local family, bathe and dress her in the finest silk wedding robes, and install her in a red-curtained chamber by the side of the river for ten days or more to fast and purify herself. They would then place her on a floating “bridal bed” and send it down the river, accompanied by an enormous wedding feast on the shore. When the bed eventually became waterlogged and sank a few miles downstream, the marriage had been consummated.⁸⁶ Ximen Bao swiftly put an end to the practice by casting the old female shaman into the Yellow River, mockingly asking her to report in person to the Earl, and then doing the same with three of her young disciples and three of the village elders.⁸⁷

According to Sima Qian, a similar ritual was performed in the neighboring state of Qin, where in 417 BCE, Duke Ling of Qin (Qin Ling Gong; r. 424–415 BCE) ritually sacrificed a princess to become the consort of the river spirit. This

was done in conjunction with the construction of dikes and dredging of canals, so it may have been viewed as recompense to the Earl for disturbing the peace of the river.⁸⁸

In the following two centuries, the Earl of the Yellow River was even fashioned into a literary character in works of philosophy and poetry. In “Autumn Floods,” the most famous chapter of the Daoist work, *Master Zhuang* (Zhuangzi; ca. 3rd century BCE), the Earl is portrayed as a proud and dominant figure, gleefully surveying his flooded handiwork on his way to the ocean, where he learns both humility and perspective when confronted with the inexhaustible vastness of the sea.⁸⁹ In the song entitled “He Bo” in the “Nine Songs” (Jiuge) collection, within the *Elegies of Chu* (Chuci), the old ritual of sending a woman to be the bride of the Earl of the Yellow River is reenacted by a shamaness at a royal court for a dramatic poetic performance. After courting the river deity across the whole length of China, the shamaness is abandoned along the shore, typical of the shamanistic disappointment and sexualized frustration seen in the poetic collection as a whole.⁹⁰

When the First Emperor of Qin was ordering his universe, he felt powerful enough to designate water as his patron element and change the name of the Yellow River from He to Deshui (River of Power).⁹¹ He also centralized sacrifices to the Yellow River at a single cult-center in Linjin, operated by official shamans. These sacrifices were continued by the Han dynasty.⁹² By the late third century BCE, however, it no longer appears that humans were sacrificed to the river spirit (at least not officially), but official rites still involved live animals such as horses and precious objects such as jade (as in the case of Emperor Wu’s sacrifices at Huzi).

The Yellow River power, and its later incarnation as the Earl of the Yellow River, was an awesome and powerful spiritual force, with disastrous potential to cut short the lives of men. It was thought that its capricious power could be curtailed through regular animal and human sacrifice, which continued in conjunction with more “rational” efforts at hydraulic engineering. Sometimes, the sacrifices were done to appease the river power after efforts at flood control had disturbed its spiritual domain. Chinese officials throughout the imperial period saw no contradiction between their roles as divine mediators (i.e., praying for rain, sacrificing to local mountains and spirits) and their administrative roles as agents of the machine-like bureaucratic state.

THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE NILE INUNDATION (HAPY)

The people of ancient Egypt also believed that there was a divine power behind the movements and seasons of their life-giving river, the Nile. This was personified in the figure of Hapy (*ḥꜥꜣ*), who represented the power of the inundation, the annual flooding of the Nile in late summer that brought fertility to the land.⁹³ Because of the recurring and perpetual nature of the flood, the coming of Hapy was also symbolic of the regular cosmic order, with both its cyclical and linear conceptions of eternity.⁹⁴ The river Nile itself, usually referenced by the word *jtr.w*, was rarely personified and never really worshipped.

Like the Yellow River power of the Shang, Hapy was a personification of a power and was not a god in the same sense that Osiris and Amun were gods.⁹⁵

There was no great temple complex or patron city dedicated to Hapy, although he had shrines, was represented in carved images and statues, and received elaborate offerings from the king, often in conjunction with sacrifices to other gods. Neither was there a detailed cycle of myths relating Hapy to the other gods, though he is sometimes referred to in hymns as “creator god” or “father of the gods,” because the inundation was recognized (along with the sun) as a wellspring of all life. Hapy certainly never became a literary character like the Earl of the Yellow River in early China.

In hymns, Hapy is described as living in a cave near Aswan, from whence he could be beckoned forth to rise in his form of the inundation of the land. In images, he is depicted in a very distinctive genre that John Baines calls a “fecundity figure.” He is represented as a slightly older male figure with pendulous breasts and a paunch that spills over a girdle or loincloth. He wears a false beard and a ceremonial wig and frequently has a clump of papyrus plants growing out of his head. His body is usually colored blue (the color of water) or green (the color of vegetation), and he sometimes carries a plate of generic offerings like bread, water, or flowers (plate 2).⁹⁶ The height of his worship appears to have occurred during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, when he received enormous offerings and was often shown together with the pharaoh, though he was worshipped continually for all of Egyptian history and even into the Roman and Christian periods.

So, what was the nature of this power that personified the forces of the Nile flood, and what does this show about the relationship between the people of ancient Egypt and their natural environment? Although there are visual depictions and scattered textual references to Hapy from the Old Kingdom, the first detailed religious texts which refer to his nature and his powers are the “Coffin Texts” of the Middle Kingdom, inscribed on the interior of coffins of regional elites. Consisting of spells to sustain and protect the dead during his afterlife journey, many of these texts were developed from the royally exclusive “Pyramid Texts” of the prior Old Kingdom, but others were more recent compositions. Several of the spells were used by the deceased to transform himself into Hapy after death and to acquire some of his powers. Hapy is said to be the source of all food in the Nile valley, and by extension, all life. He is also referenced as the father or leader of the gods, because of his great antiquity and the fact that the bread he provided made it possible to feed the gods in sacrificial rituals. Another theme common to the spells is the notion that Hapy will do exactly as he wishes, and no one can oppose him or guide him in another direction. He cannot be bounded and cuts through all barriers.

I am Hapy, who comes and goes at his desire, and there is none who will divert him from what he wishes. (spell 319)

I make herbage grow, I nourish the realm of Lower Egypt, I create offerings for the gods. (spell 320)⁹⁷

In the context of the afterlife, these spells probably served to ensure that the deceased would have an endless supply of both water and food.

“Great Hymn to the Nile”

What scholars have called the “Great Hymn to the Nile” is an evocative verse composition addressed to Hapy and designed to invoke his presence.⁹⁸ Probably composed during the Middle Kingdom and sometimes attributed to the poet Khety, it survives in numerous New Kingdom copies, many of them corrupt or fragmentary, for it was used as a school text for centuries after its composition.⁹⁹ Scholars are divided over whether it represents an actual liturgical hymn sung during a ritual to Hapy, or a polished literary composition for recitation at court, much like the “He Bo” poem in *Elegies of Chu*, described earlier.¹⁰⁰

In the hymn, Hapy is praised as the source of all life, livelihood, and prosperity in Egypt, because it was recognized that the food derived from agriculture was at the root of all pursuits. The second and third stanzas of the hymn encapsulate the powerful influence he had over the lives of men:

Lord of the fish, who makes wildfowl fly south,
And there is no bird falls through greed of the winds;
Who creates barley; who brings emmer into being,
Who makes festive the temples.
But when he is sluggish, then noses stop up,
Then everyone is poverty-stricken;
If there is ravaging among the primeval sites of the gods,
Then men by the millions are perished from mankind.

When he is rapacious as a malady throughout the land,
Great men and small are forced to migrate.
People change [their character] in accordance with his coming,
[And have done so] since Khnum formed him.
But when he rises, the earth is in jubilation,
Then every belly is in rejoicing,
All backbones, they have taken to laughing,
Each tooth is bared.¹⁰¹

These two stanzas appear to present “three moods” of Hapy.¹⁰² In his normal and expected mood, Hapy floods the land to just the right depth, and everyone in Egypt is happy. But when he is “sluggish” (*wšf*), meaning he does not rise high enough, millions of people die and the gods are starved for lack of offerings. At the opposite end of the spectrum, when Hapy is “rapacious” (*jr ʿwn-jb*), meaning the flooding rises too high or too fast, it sends the land into chaos and causes people to migrate as refugees. The third line in the third stanza—“People change in accordance with his coming”—is revealing, as it suggests that the character of the people corresponded to and changed with the nature of the Nile’s flooding.¹⁰³ If this interpretation is correct, this is a kind of correlative thinking that has a close parallel in the theories of Dong Zhongshu in China, although for Egypt it appears to have operated in the opposite direction. An aggressive Nile made the people aggressive, but it does not seem to have operated the other way around, where a violent and rapacious people (or ruler) would cause the Nile to behave likewise.

Beyond his changing moods, one can deduce more about the basic nature of Hapy from this text, at least how he was viewed during the New Kingdom when this hymn and others of this genre were promoted in scribal schools and

imperial propaganda. It is clear from the text that Hapy can be beckoned or welcomed, but he cannot be coerced. Just as in the Coffin Texts, the hymn clearly states that Hapy will do whatever he wishes and that “there is no contending against him,” nor can he be guided along a different path or contained within any human-set boundaries. So, he is usually a beneficent power, but he is also arbitrary and willful. One must simply tolerate his changing moods, for his will is beyond the capacity of human understanding. The autocratic nature of Hapy seen in the “Great Hymn” is a reflection of the nature of New Kingdom pharaohs, another sovereign power who brought benefit to the people but whose will was also irresistible and unquestionable.¹⁰⁴

In terms of actual ritual, it appears that the singing of the hymns was accompanied by great sacrificial ceremonies. The end of the “Great Hymn” itself refers to such activities:

When Hapy surges up, they make offering to him:
Cattle are sacrificed to him,
Great festivals are held for him,
Fowl are fattened for him,
Lions are snared for him out on the desert,
Kindnesses are repaid him.
And they made offering to each god
Just as has been done for Hapy:—
Finest incense, small and large cattle, and birds in thanksgiving—
[Now] Hapy in his cavern grows powerful.¹⁰⁵

It is implied from this and other passages that the food and incense offered to Hapy nourished him and helped him grow more powerful before and during his rise, so the offering was both an enticement and a thanksgiving.

Besides the polished literary representation of offering rituals in “Great Hymn to the Nile,” we also have inscriptional and documentary evidence of great sacrificial festivals and temple donations for Hapy from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. Sixty kilometers north of Aswan, near where the Nile inundation was thought to arise, Seti I (r. ca. 1301–1290 BCE) commissioned a small shrine carved from the living rock on the west bank of the Nile at Gebel el-Silsila ([map 1.1](#)) with bas-relief images and a hieroglyphic inscription endowing two festivals in honor of Hapy, one on the eve of the high Nile (for thanksgiving) and one at the time of the lowest Nile (for enticement).¹⁰⁶ Seti’s inscription was later joined by close parallel inscriptions from Ramesses II (r. ca. 1290–1224) and Merneptah (r. ca. 1224–1214 BCE), repeating the sacrifice, and an even later one (ca. 1180 BCE) from Ramesses III of the Twentieth Dynasty.¹⁰⁷ After an opening section that has parallels in the “Great Hymn to the Nile,” the Gebel el-Silsila texts record a list of offerings made by each pharaoh to Hapy (and to other gods in conjunction). In the offerings donated by Ramesses II, who is referred to in the text as “beloved of Hapy,” we see hundreds of food items like “calves, five red,” “cakes, three hundred loaves,” or “grapes, thirty-eight dishes,” but also some precious materials to make statues and images, such as, “gold, fourteen [for] images,” or “hard copper, fourteen [for images].”

Corroborating this inscriptional evidence from Gebel el-Silsila, we have a

papyrus that records donations made by Ramesses III to the worship of Hapy at the great cult centers of Heliopolis and Memphis. This is found in the “Great Harris Papyrus,” which was written during the reign of Ramesses IV (ca. 1160 BCE) and found by looters in a tomb at Deir el-Medina in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Here is a very small sampling of the items donated to Hapy’s cult at three locations in Heliopolis each year, for a period of thirty-one years:¹⁰⁹

Books of Hapy
 47,000 loaves for divine offerings
 10,432 pots
 2,564
 3,089
 27,148 [total]
 6,784 statues of Hapy
 6,784 female statues of Hapy
 13,564 animals for statues of Hapy
 5,006 female statues of Hapy
 5,006 female statues of the female consort of Hapy

The number of animals and objects in these donations staggers the imagination. While there is a possibility that some of the numbers, which are curiously uniform multiples, may have been fabricated for an auspicious purpose, other supporting parts of the text and the Gebel el-Silsila inscription encourage us to accept the colossal numbers. One fascinating mention in the papyrus listing is the “Books of Hapy” (*mdz.wt-hʿpy*), which appear to have been lists of items offered to Hapy in sacrifice.¹¹⁰ The Gebel el-Silsila inscription refers to these books as well and says that on a particular day they were “thrown” (*hʿʿ*), which suggests that they were tossed into the Nile (or maybe into a fire by the river) as part of the ritual.¹¹¹ So, rather than throwing half a million loaves of bread and a thousand goat carcasses into the surging river, priests merely tossed in a list of such sacrifices as a substitute, while the celebrants and clients of the temple consumed the real bounty of the pharaoh themselves.

An important point to note about the offering lists from Gebel el-Silsila and the “Great Harris Papyrus” is that there is no mention of an actual human sacrifice to Hapy. The latter text does mention statues of a “consort of Hapy,” but we do not know how these statues were used or if they symbolically stood in for a virgin sacrificed to the river as occurred in China.¹¹² Herodotus insisted that the Egyptians did not engage in human sacrifice, and our only references to young maidens sacrificed to the Nile to encourage the inundation in drought years come from fantastic legends and pseudo-histories from Late Antiquity, when genuine knowledge of Egyptian civilization had faded away.¹¹³

Based on our extant sources, the people of early China never really enticed the Yellow River to flood, nor gave it thanks in great ceremonies for the bounty and fertility it provided, as the people of Egypt did for Hapy. Rather, the men and women of traditional China mostly dreaded the Yellow River’s awesome power to sweep away everything in its path. These differing attitudes toward the rivers and their spiritual powers may have reflected the nature of their flooding. The Nile flood was a necessity for settled life in Egypt, since there was

no way to irrigate artificially the low-lying agricultural fields in the flood basins without the inundation. The people of Egypt welcomed and enticed the Nile to rise, and thanked it generously when it came as expected in late summer. When it failed to rise sufficiently, or rose too much and forced people out of their homes, this was to be lamented, but had to be accepted as the inscrutable, sovereign will of the gods. When the Yellow River flooded, it did so unpredictably and disastrously. Because of the lack of a natural channel and the raised riverbed with its enormous dikes that had been built up naturally and artificially, when the Yellow River broke out of its bounds, it could kill tens of thousands of people in minutes and alter its course by hundreds of kilometers, leaving unimaginable and long-lasting devastation in its wake. A power so capricious and severe, and so destructive of life, could only be placated by the ultimate sacrifice.

Conclusion

The political and ritual landscapes of the Yellow River and the Nile were mental and ritual constructs that were overlaid like sheets of cloth upon the physical landscape of the river valleys, replicating the contours and texture of the underlying geohydrological system. And even though Karl Wittfogel was incorrect about the primary role of water-related labor mobilization in integrating the first states in Egypt and China, it is still possible that in some ways the character of each civilization, its agricultural regime, its degree of bureaucratization and political centralization, and its religious outlook were at least strongly correlated with the nature of their respective rivers. Even more certain is the fact that the vicissitudes of the flooding of the Nile and Yellow River were strongly connected to the rise and fall of dynasties.

Looking toward divergences in the two systems, we see that the Chinese state invested vastly larger amounts of manpower and resources to restrain the Yellow River and to construct irrigation and transport canals on some of its tributaries. The Egyptians were not just passive toward the Nile, however, for they shared the same impulse to master the river water, eventually opening up the Faiyum for cultivation during the Middle Kingdom, but the technological drive toward innovation and mass projects was not as strong as in China. This might be due to the fact that the danger of the river was not so terrifying, nor the population so numerous, nor the political power as centralized as in China, where millions could be called up for *corvée* on statewide projects. Egyptian river administration was definitely more local and piecemeal. So, Wittfogel was partially right in that the degree of control over water resources was an index of the centralized power of the state.

2

Empire and Diplomacy

Through traits and developments in China and Egypt that are analogous or comparable, though not necessarily identical, we can explore old questions from a fresh perspective. One such phenomenon that exhibits strong parallel development in both civilizations is the conquest of neighboring polities to form empires. During the second half of the Western Han period (ca. 130 BCE–8 CE), China expanded toward the four directions of the compass and added more than three million square kilometers to the size of the state.¹ In Egypt, the warrior pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1548–1302 BCE) that inaugurated the New Kingdom conquered Nubian territory (present-day Sudan) past the fourth cataract of the Nile, and moved north into the Levant, reaching as far as the Euphrates in Syria.

Each of these great expansions was actually the second foray into empire for these two civilizations.² During the early Middle Kingdom in Egypt, Egyptian armies had conquered Lower Nubia (past the second cataract of the Nile) and established enormous walled forts like that at Buhen ([map 1.1](#)), while the aggressive Qin state in China had conquered all six of its rival states (ca. 316–221 BCE), then pushed south to Vietnam and north beyond the Yellow River, constructing the connected fortifications of the Great Wall to keep out the Xiongnu nomads ([map 1.2](#)).³ But, when the final Thirteenth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom weakened, the southern Egyptian conquests were lost, and the area of the frontier forts switched allegiance to the powerful Nubian state that formed at Kerma.⁴ Similarly, when the Qin dynasty collapsed in 207 BCE and the country fell into civil war, the Xiongnu reacquired their old pasture lands inside the Great Wall and formed a powerful nomadic confederation, which was easily a match for the Chinese army. The reestablishment of empires under the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt and Han dynasty of China would not only recapture these lost territories, but also extend the frontiers much further

afield.

In the realm of semantics, we observe a remarkable similarity in the scope of the terms used in Egyptian and Chinese texts to differentiate between the consolidation of those lands viewed as rightly part of the same cultural domain and those new frontier conquests beyond the traditional realm. For instance, unifying the realm of Egypt, meaning to possess both Upper Egypt (the south) and Lower Egypt (the north), is described by the expression “to unite the Two Lands” (*zm3-t3.wj*). Paralleling that phrase in China, when the First Emperor of Qin refers to his conquest of the other six states to unify the realm, he calls this “combining all [the lands] under Heaven” (*bing Tianxia*).⁵ But when Thutmose III (r. ca. 1479–1425 BCE) recounts how he charged into the Levant, into lands not normally considered part of Egypt, this is referred to as “broadening the frontier” (*swsh t3š*).⁶ Similarly, in China, when Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 BCE) extends the Han empire into Central Asia, this is called “broadening the land” (*guangdi*).⁷

Scholars have long recognized that the two New Kingdom imperial conquests, Nubia and the Levant, represent two different approaches to empire. In Nubia, Egypt attempted to colonize the area thoroughly, breaking up indigenous polities and founding numerous garrisons and settlements centered around temples dedicated to local manifestations of traditional Egyptian gods. This cultural thrust had an Egyptianizing influence on the local elites, whose tombs became almost indistinguishable from elite Egyptian ones.⁸ The administrative and taxation system of Egypt was also transplanted to Nubia with little change. In their Levantine empire, however, Egypt took a different approach, for they did not attempt to replace the existing polities or their cultures, but left local rulers in place as clients who gave tribute and manpower, and whose sons were sent as hostages for education in Egypt. In an early work, anthropologist Bruce G. Trigger suggested that this distinction was caused by a cultural bias similar to modern racial colonialism, where the dark-skinned Nubian subjects were viewed as uncivilized barbarians,⁹ but more recent scholarship has undermined this interpretation, emphasizing shared origins and important continuities between Egyptian and Nubian cultures.¹⁰

Other cultural and ecological factors may have led to the two different forms of imperialism.¹¹ Since Nubia was bisected by the same Nile around which Egyptian civilization arose and was also, in some sense, the domain of the Egyptian gods, Barry Kemp considers that New Kingdom Egypt viewed this land as a “quasi-extension of Egypt at more than a purely geographic level,” largely suitable for the same riverine civilization that predominated in the north.¹² Syria-Palestine, in contrast, was not part of Nilotic civilization and was probably not viewed as suitable for the same type of colonial or cultural development.

One can also view the distinction between the two areas in terms of efficiency of resource extraction. The products of the south, like gold, ivory, and slaves, could be more efficiently exploited and transported north if the Egyptians created their own secure infrastructure of mines and colonies, with a fortified transit corridor to ensure a constant flow of materials, without middlemen. In the Levant, many desired resources like copper, silver, and tin came from much further afield, but needed to travel through the conquered territory to reach Egypt. Transit corridors already existed to guarantee the flow

of tribute goods, so Egypt merely needed to secure them.¹³

In a parallel development in Han China, the conquests under Emperor Wu were also subject to different levels of imperial control and assimilation policies, based not only on limiting factors such as physical distance from the capital or ecological setting, but also on a perception of how barbarous the conquered regions were perceived to be. For example, when Emperor Wu's generals conquered parts of present-day North Korea in a series of campaigns around 108 BCE, the imperial government immediately carved that territory into a number of commanderies (*jun*) and counties (*xian*) with centrally appointed officials, exactly like the administrative structure of the imperial core.¹⁴ A similar practice was followed after the conquest of the kingdom of Nanyue in the south, occupying what is now present-day Guangdong province and northern Vietnam.¹⁵ Since these territories were amenable to the type of agrarian regime that predominated in Han China proper and had been ruled for generations by Chinese polities or Chinese expatriates, using an administrative system modeled on the Chinese core, it was considered suitable to absorb these regions directly into the empire as additional provinces, although thorough assimilation of the south would take centuries.

Other Western Han conquests were administered differently, at least initially. When the Han annexed from the Xiongnu the vast Hexi Corridor west of the Yellow River in 121 BCE ([map 1.2](#)), they first set up military protectorates. Within fifty years, this area, too, was assimilated into the regular structure of the empire, after an infusion of agricultural colonists from the imperial core.

When large groups of people who were not ethnic Han—such as the Xiongnu or Qiang, who resided on the northern and northwestern frontier—surrendered to Han authority, they were administered as internal colonies that served as buffer states, called “dependent states” (*shuguo*). They were allowed to retain their alien linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions (for a time), but their territory and military affairs were administered by officials sent from the imperial court. Over time, these internal colonies were expected to assimilate gradually to Han culture and their territories would then be absorbed into the standard administrative system.¹⁶

But the Han would attempt no real assimilation policy in the thirty-six oasis agricultural states in the Tarim Basin and Turfan, collectively called the Western Regions (Xiyu; [map 1.2](#)). Much in the way the Egyptian empire controlled its territory in the Levant, the Han empire first tried to control this area with occasional military razzias and circuit envoys, then in 60 BCE sent a viceroy to this area to coordinate tribute and political and military affairs of these minor vassal states and to suppress revolts.¹⁷ Beyond their tribute, hostage, and military obligations, however, these vassal states were relatively autonomous.

The Egyptian empire in Nubia could be constructively compared to the Han conquests in North Korea or southeast China, regarding issues like settler colonization or hybridity among indigenous groups. But for our comparison here, the distant Western Regions of the Han empire and the Levantine empire of the New Kingdom are more useful for highlighting issues of envoys and epistolary culture, marriage diplomacy, and resource acquisition. But, before we delve into these comparative areas, we must first briefly lay the

groundwork of *why* and *how* these imperial domains were subjugated and how they were administered.

Why did China venture into Central Asia and subjugate such an enormous territory? We can finally lay to rest the unfounded thesis popular during the twentieth century that Han China intentionally expanded into Central Asia to establish a “Silk Road,” securing export of this valuable textile.¹⁸ Most scholars since the 1970s have instead supported the theory that the northwestern Chinese empire was acquired as an “unforeseen result,” following a series of strategic moves in the very serious conflict with the Xiongnu nomadic confederation.¹⁹ Under their charismatic leader Maodun, the Xiongnu had subjugated the whole Hexi Corridor and Western Regions, drawing tribute in resources and soldiers. When the Han envoy Zhang Qian was sent westward around 138 BCE, and again around 117 BCE, it was to seek allies against the Xiongnu in hopes to “cut off their right arm,” a term he used for the Xiongnu’s Central Asian territories.²⁰ Scholars have advanced similar theories for why the founding pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty extended the frontiers of Egypt into the Levant, arguing that it was an “appropriate and necessary” consequence of their “war of liberation” to drive the Hyksos (*ḥkꜣ-ḥꜣs.wt*; “rulers of foreign lands”) out of Egypt.²¹ This view is supported by contemporary texts of the early Eighteenth Dynasty, which claim that Egyptian armies charged into Asia to pursue the fleeing Hyksos and then held that territory to forestall the threat of their return.²²

Both of these prevailing explanations exemplify “defensive imperialism,” the notion that conquering states entertained no conscious designs on conquest, but acquired their vast domains unintentionally through defensive military moves motivated solely by self-preservation. Similar notions of defensive imperialism were commonly deployed before the 1970s to explain the Roman Republic’s expansion from Italy as the unintended result of a series of strategic defensive moves against hostile neighbors.²³ Serious critiques in the last few decades have labeled such explanations as self-serving apologies for imperialism and colonialism by biased Anglo-American scholars.

While “defensive imperialism” explanations have some merit, focusing on the net effect of numerous strategic decisions, we must still stress the importance of imperial expansion for its own sake. Expansion was the very lifeblood of empire and its key defining trait, justified and driven by ideological imperatives.²⁴ We could also use a modern business analogy and say that if an empire is not *expanding*, then it is *collapsing*, or at least falling into a kind of ossified stasis.

A fundamental imperative in expansion was the acquisition of valuable movable resources. For the Roman Empire, it was a steady supply of slaves and booty from conquest that could be used to build elite political and economic power. For the Egyptians, it was direct access to Nubian gold and Lebanese cedar, both crucial to elite legitimation and material culture, especially mortuary culture. The presence of the Hyksos in Lower Egypt had frustrated Egyptian access to the eastern Mediterranean, its chief source of timber, and the Nubian kingdom of Kush had blocked direct Egyptian access to gold.²⁵ In the case of Han China, the key resources of Central Asia were the “heavenly horses” of places like Dayuan and Wusun, which were needed to establish stud farms for the Han cavalry, as well as the exquisite jade of Khotan, which was

essential for royal burials and elite court ritual. Acquiring these resources was made almost impossible by Xiongnu control of this territory.

How Egypt and China acquired their vassal-state empires can be quickly summarized here, because earlier published studies recount all the details.²⁶ The Egyptian New Kingdom empire began with the rebellion of the princes of Thebes against the Hyksos rulers who ruled Lower Egypt from their capital in the Delta at Avaris ([map 1.1](#)). The battles were commenced by Seqenenre Tao (r. ca. 1560–1555 BCE), but the victory was carried through by the ruler Kamose (r. ca. 1555–1548 BCE) and then by his brother Ahmose (r. ca. 1548–1523 BCE), who sacked the Hyksos capital and drove them back into southern Palestine, where he besieged and captured their citadel at Sharuhēn, near present-day Gaza. Subsequent pharaohs of the new Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt continued to send raids deep into the Levant, destroying cities, capturing booty, and demanding oaths of allegiance from conquered local rulers, while the adventurous Thutmose I (r. ca. 1502–1492 BCE) personally battled as far as the Euphrates in Syria and commissioned a victory stele. But it was not until the relentless campaigns of Thutmose III, that Egypt sought to permanently conquer territory that would “broaden the frontier” of Egypt. Following his major victory against the Kadesh-allied forces at Megiddo (ca. 1457 BCE) and his later campaigns against the powerful kingdom of Mitanni as far as the Euphrates, local Canaanite rulers all bowed down in submission and the great kings of Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, and Cyprus sent gifts and recognized the king of Egypt as a “great king,” to be allowed into their diplomatic circle. For the next two centuries, Egypt would maintain a network of vassal states in Palestine, Lebanon, and southern Syria, requiring an oath of allegiance from the local ruler they approved and installed, a princely hostage, assigned tribute, and the provisioning of troops. This network was at first administered on an ad-hoc basis by irregularly appointed Egyptian envoys, but later the system was regularized with circuit attendants and garrison towns, and the territory divided into something approximating provinces.

The Han conquest of Central Asia began with the failed first diplomatic mission of Zhang Qian, who was sent between 138 and 126 BCE to the far west to seek allies in the fight against the Xiongnu. While he did not succeed in his primary mission, he brought back concrete knowledge of the states in that area, which excited Emperor Wu with the prospects of exotic goods and new subjects who could recognize his authority. A watershed came in 121 BCE, when two military raids by the daring general Huo Qubing (ca. 140–117 BCE) cleared the entire Hexi Corridor for Han colonization and opened wide the gates to Central Asia. After Zhang Qian’s slightly more successful second mission around 117 BCE (to broker an alliance with the Wusun), the most important event in the formation of the Chinese client-state empire in Central Asia was the multiyear campaign (104–101 BCE) of Li Guangli to conquer the state of Dayuan, in the far-off Ferghana valley of eastern Uzbekistan ([map 1.2](#)). Much like Thutmose III’s audacious crossing of the Euphrates in distant Syria, the conquest of Dayuan intimidated many of the surrounding polities and compelled them to recognize Han authority. After four more decades of military raids, deposing of local rulers, diplomatic pressure, targeted agricultural colonization, and the elimination of Xiongnu influence, the Han finally regularized their vassal-state empire in 60 BCE under the control of a viceroy, the protector-general of the

Western Regions (Xiyu Duhu), who coordinated all the political and military affairs of the now nearly fifty vassal states from his headquarters at Wulei, almost three thousand kilometers from the capital ([map 1.2](#)). Like the arrangement with Egypt's client states, the Han vassals were expected to send a hostage son to Chang'an, carry tribute to regular court audiences, provide troops and provisions when requested, and accept Chinese titles and occasional administrators, but they remained relatively autonomous. Their territories were regularly inspected by Han circuit envoys, just as in the Egyptian empire.

After the expansive phase of "broadening the frontier," empires like those of New Kingdom Egypt and Han China employed various forms of diplomacy to maintain control of the new network of client-states in the buffer zone and to stabilize the balance of power with neighboring empires, avoiding direct military conflict. In each of the following categories of comparison, we must be clear to separate those relations between the "great powers"—such as the peer-polity diplomacy between Egypt and Babylon or those of the Han court with the Xiongnu—from those relations conducted between the core imperial power and its vassal states.

Correspondence and Envoy Diplomacy

In both East Asia and the Near East, the principal form of diplomacy involved the exchange of written letters carried by personal envoys of the sovereign. Setting aside differences in specific historical situations, the surviving diplomatic correspondence between the great powers of the Late Bronze Age in the Near East are remarkably similar in format to those letters sent between Han China and the Xiongnu nomadic confederation, the only other great power in East Asia. Even the letters exchanged between Egypt and its vassal states in Syria-Palestine share some generic features with the rare surviving pieces of correspondence between the Han empire and its vassals.

Our knowledge of Late Bronze Age Near Eastern interstate communications is greatly enriched by the corpus of texts known as the "Amarna Letters." These cuneiform clay tablets were discovered by locals in 1887 at the site of Tell el-Amarna ([map 1.1](#)), which was the site of Akhenaten's capital. Controlled excavations later revealed the find spot to be a building in the central city referenced on stamped bricks as "The Place of the Letters of Pharaoh—life, prosperity, and health" (*t3-s.t-šꜥ.t-pr-ꜥ3 ḥꜥ-wꜥ3-snb*).²⁷ The 350 letters and associated inventory lists in the corpus constitute a partial archive of the "foreign office" of Egypt, with the actual letters received, and in some cases, drafts or copies of letters sent from Egypt to the other great powers of the Near East, including Babylon, Mitanni, Assyria, Alashiya (Cyprus), and the Hittites, as well as communications between Egypt and its vassal client states in Syria-Palestine. They cover a chronological range of only about fifteen to twenty years, from late in the reign of Amenhotep III until the first year or two of Tutankhamen's reign.²⁸

Unlike the invaluable Amarna archive from Egypt, no original diplomatic correspondence survives from Han China, save for a few notices regarding the movement of Central Asian envoys and tribute from the Xuanquanzhi site ([map 1.2](#)). But what we do have is nearly as valuable, for Sima Qian's *Records of the*

Grand Scribe and Ban Gu's *History of the Han* record the entire text of a group of letters sent between Han emperors and the *chanyu*, the leader of the Xiongnu confederation, including some entire correspondence chains. The *Records of the Grand Scribe* also contains some communication sent between the Han emperor and the unruly and often-independent vassal state of Nanyue in the far south. While we cannot be certain that these letters have not been edited or embellished by the Han historians, both authors did have access to the imperial archives and could have seen originals or copies of the diplomatic correspondence.

With only a few exceptions, the Amarna corpus of letters is written in cuneiform script, using the Babylonian form of the Akkadian language, the *lingua franca* of Near Eastern diplomacy since Hammurabi's time.²⁹ The presence of school texts like bilingual word lists and Mesopotamian epics in the corpus suggests that Egyptian scribes underwent traditional Babylonian training to be able to read and write this foreign language. The pharaoh's letters were probably dictated in Egyptian, written in hieratic cursive script on papyrus, then translated by scribes of the foreign office into Babylonian and written in cuneiform script on clay tablets. But we also know from ink-written dockets, like that seen on the letter in [figure 2.1](#), that scribes in the office wrote in hieratic Egyptian when filing the received letters.

This linguistic and cultural translation put Egypt at a distinct disadvantage, since they entered rather late into a communication system that had developed over centuries, and for which the participants already knew the rules of the game. The conventions of the system prevented Egypt from clearly expressing its own notions of superiority, for all the kings were addressed using the same Babylonian phrase, *šarru rabû* ("Great King"). When he addressed his own people, the Egyptian king was the chosen Son of Re, the unique, King of Upper and Lower Egypt (*nswt-bj.tj*). To them he was "the image of god, a divine deputy on earth," but in the Amarna Letters, he is just like the kings of Babylon or Mitanni.³⁰



Figure 2.1. Letter from Tushratta of Mitanni to Amenhotep III of Egypt (verso), Syria, Mitanni Kingdom, Middle Babylonian period (Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty), ca. 1354–1350 BCE. Clay tablet with incised cuneiform and ink-drawn hieratic writing, L 9 cm, W 5 cm, Tell el-Amarna site, Egypt. British Museum, accession no. E29793 (EA 23), © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

When the Han empire wanted to initiate diplomatic communication with their Xiongnu rivals to the north, they did not have to reinvent the wheel. The type of diplomatic correspondence seen in the Han–Xiongnu exchanges was inherited from the well-developed communication patterns of the late Warring States period in China, when the rival states regularly exchanged letters, envoys, gifts, spies, and hostages, part of an elaborate balance-of-powers drama

that for centuries prevented one state from acquiring absolute supremacy. Since the Xiongnu had developed no written language, diplomacy with the Han empire either had to be conducted orally through envoys and interpreters, or through written correspondence in Chinese. So, just as the Egyptians had to compromise and enter a correspondence network written in a foreign language, the Xiongnu had to acquire the skills and personnel to correspond with the Han emperor in Chinese. While this would seem to have put them at a disadvantage, the very polished letters that survive, dictated by the various *chanyu*, indicate that they and their turncoat Chinese advisers were more than up to the challenge. Indeed, they had mastered the genre so well that they could taunt their Chinese counterpart in subtle ways and also manipulate the materiality of the letters to express their own superior political-military position.

A comparison of two of these diplomatic letters, one sent between the great peer polities of East Asia and one between those of the Near East, illustrates the similar features in these correspondence genres. The first is a masterful, almost poetic, letter sent by Maodun (r. ca. 234–174 BCE), *chanyu* of the Xiongnu confederation, to Emperor Wen of the Han empire in 176 BCE, in response to the Chinese ruler's letter from a prior year.

The Great Chanyu, who Heaven has established, respectfully inquires of the emperor's health. Formerly, the emperor broached the question of a "peace through kinship" (*heqin*) alliance, and I was most happy to comply with the intentions expressed in his letter. Certain Han border officials, however, imposed upon and insulted the Wise King of the Right, and as a result, he heeded the counsel of Houyi, Luhou, Nanzhi, and others of his generals and, [without asking my permission], engaged in a skirmish with the Han officials, thus violating the pact between the rulers of our two nations and rupturing the bonds of brotherhood that joined us. The emperor has twice sent letters complaining of the situation and I have in turn dispatched an envoy with my answer, but my envoy has not been allowed to return, nor has any envoy come from the Han. As a result, the Han has broken off peaceful relations and our two neighboring countries are no longer bound in alliance.

Because of the violation of the pact committed by the petty officials, and the subsequent events, I have punished the Wise King of the Right by sending him west to search out the Yuezhi people and attack them. Through the aid of Heaven, the excellence of his fighting men, and the strength of his horses, he has succeeded in wiping out the Yuezhi, slaughtering or forcing to submission every member of the tribe. In addition, he has conquered the Loulan, Wusun [[map 1.2](#)], and Hujie tribes, as well as the twenty-six states nearby, so that all of them have become part of the Xiongnu empire. All the people who live by drawing the bow are now united into one family and the entire region of the north is at peace.

Thus, I wish now to lay down my weapons, rest my soldiers, and turn my horses to pasture; to forget the recent affair, and restore our old pact, that the peoples of the border may have peace such as they enjoyed in former times, that the young may grow to manhood, the old live out their lives in security, and generation after generation enjoy peace and happiness.

However, I do not as yet know the intentions of the emperor. Therefore, I have dispatched my palace attendant Xihuqian to bear this letter. At the same time, I beg to present one camel, two riding horses, and two quadriga teams. If the emperor does not wish the Xiongnu to approach his frontier, then he should order the officials and people along the border to withdraw a good

distance back from the frontier. When my envoy has arrived and delivered this, I trust that he will be sent back to me.³¹

A letter sent around 1370 BCE from Amenhotep III (r. ca. 1389–1349 BCE) of Egypt to Kadašman-Enlil I (r. ca. 1374–1360 BCE), king of Kassite Babylonia is relatively brief:

Thus, Nibmuareya (i.e., *Neb-Maat-Re*, [Amenhotep III]), the king of Egypt. Say to Kadašman-Enlil, the king of Karaduniyash (i.e., Babylon), my brother: For me all goes well. For you may all go well. For your household, your wives, your sons, your magnates, your troops, your horses, your chariots, and in your countries, may all go well. For me, all goes well. For my household, my wives, my sons, my magnates, my many troops, my horses, my chariots, and in my countries, all goes very, very well.

I have just heard that you have built some new quarters. I am herewith sending some furnishings for your house. Indeed, I shall be preparing everything possible before the arrival of your messenger who is bringing your daughter. When your messenger returns, I will send them to you. I herewith send you, in the charge of Shutti, a greeting gift of things for the new house: one bed of ebony, overlaid with ivory and gold; three beds of ebony, overlaid with gold; one *uruššu* of ebony, overlaid with gold; one large chair of ebony, overlaid with gold; five chairs of ebony, overlaid with gold; four chairs of ebony, overlaid with gold. These things, the weight of all the gold: seven minas, nine shekels of gold. The weight of the silver, one mina, 8½ shekels of silver. In addition, ten footrests of ebony; ... of ebony, overlaid with gold; ... footrests of ivory, overlaid with gold; ... of gold. [Total ...] minas, ten and seven shekels of gold.³²

Both letters open with a semi-informal address and salutation. The constraints of the genre and the fictive kinship relations represented therein prevent each ruler from using their full titulary, as they might do in documents serving an official or memorial function. Thus, Amenhotep III cannot use his five different names (which we will see more fully in his marriage scarab inscription) but only his throne name—Nebmaatre (rendered *Nibmuareya* in Babylonian)—while the term he uses to call himself, king (*šarru*), is the same used to address his counterpart in Babylon.³³ Amenhotep does alter the standard introduction slightly by mentioning his own name first, a casual insinuation of superiority.³⁴ Maodun also manages a little one-upmanship in his letter opening, for he expands his title from that normally employed by the Han, Great Chanyu (Da Chanyu) by adding the phrase “established by Heaven” (Tian *suo li*), which was a slight against the Chinese emperor, who was supposedly the only ruler chosen by Heaven. This tactic purportedly followed the suggestion of the Chinese turncoat eunuch, Zhonghang Yue, who had been sent, unwillingly, to the Xiongnu court as an attendant to an imperial princess. For another letter, Zhonghang Yue instructed the *chanyu* to aggrandize his title even further to “Great Chanyu of the Xiongnu, born of Heaven and the Earth, and installed by the Sun and the Moon” (Tian-Di *suosheng ri yue suozhi*), and to make his letter taller by one inch than those sent by the Han, with more elaborate seals. The message would have been unmistakable and would have rankled the Han court.³⁵

Both in the Near East and East Asia, the international relations between the great powers was expressed using the language of kinship, where each side referred to the other as “brother.” The brother metaphor (Babylonian: *aḫu*) served quite well to characterize the great-power diplomacy of the Near East, because in all these cultures brothers expressed familial love for one another, but also bickered and fought.³⁶ Marriage alliances, which are discussed in the next section, actualized this metaphor, such as when king Tushratta of Mitanni calls Amenhotep III his “brother” and his “son-in-law,” since both his sister and his daughter had married the Egyptian king.³⁷ In the Chinese context, the term used in the diplomatic correspondence between the Xiongnu and the Han was *xiongdī*, which means “brothers,” but is actually a compound phrase made up of *xiong* (older brother) and *dī* (younger brother).³⁸ Even when the Han were forced to acknowledge the Xiongnu as a brother-state, they would still try to subtly express their superiority by suggesting that China was the older brother, regardless of the relative age of the two monarchs.³⁹ The rhetorical fiction of brotherhood and equality was reserved for diplomatic correspondence alone, while propagandistic texts directed at domestic elites continued to regard the foreign power as an inferior barbarian. For example, even though Egypt had signed a brotherhood treaty with Mitanni and entered into marriage relations, illustrations and inscriptions carved on temple walls during the reign of Amenhotep III continued to show the king “smiting the vile Naharin” (i.e., Mitanni) as if the two were still at war.⁴⁰ Similarly, in Han court documents, the Xiongnu continued to be called *kou* (marauders) or *lu* (captives), even after peace treaties were concluded.

The salutation formula (inquiring about the recipient’s health) is also fairly similar in the examples from the Near East and East Asia. These phrases appear to derive from the genre of personal letters, as opposed to official correspondence.⁴¹ But the salutation formula in the Amarna Letters goes even further, reporting the king’s own situation, and inquiring about the recipient and his wives, sons, nobles, armies, horses, and chariots.

Subsequent to these formalities, the real issue of the letter could be introduced. In both the East Asian diplomatic letters and those from the Amarna corpus, the monarch or his scribe would usually reference or quote at length the recently received piece of correspondence to which the current letter was responding. This was done to avoid confusion about the topic of the letter and to remind the listener of what was at stake, for it sometimes took longer than half a year for an envoy to travel with a diplomatic letter, even if he was not attacked or detained. In the surviving Amarna Letters between the great kings, the most prevalent topics were negotiations over marriage alliances and wrangling over the number and quality of gifts. Rarely do the kings write about important political or military issues such as the border disputes that predominate in the Han correspondence with the Xiongnu. For instance, Emperor Wen had twice complained in previous letters about a Xiongnu vassal king crossing the frontier and attacking Han territory. This was a significant invasion and a violation of an earlier peace treaty. Maodun minimizes it and calls it a confrontation (*xiangu*) and responds that he had punished this vassal, but the punishment involved sending him west to complete the conquest of the steppe and the city states of the Western Regions. This was the major military accomplishment of Maodun’s reign, but in this letter, it is mentioned as almost

an unintended consequence. The high officials at the Han court read it correctly, however, for they realized that Maodun was invincible at this point and could not be attacked, so they sued for peace. In Emperor Wen's response (174 BCE) to Maodun's letter (not reproduced here), he could only congratulate Maodun on his great victories and send him reciprocal gifts of embroidered robes and rolls of silk, but he did subtly imply some level of sovereignty over the Xiongnu by saying that an amnesty he recently declared in China would forgive the crime of the Xiongnu vassal lord for his border transgression.⁴²

The letters between the peer polities of East Asia and the Near East always conclude with gift giving, expressed under the metaphor of brotherly greetings. The gifts were sometimes of a very personal nature and almost always consisted of valuable items that were greatly desired in the recipient's country. Thus, Maodun sends to Emperor Wen a camel, riding horses, and two quadriga teams from his own stables. The Chinese emperor reciprocated with embroidered robes from his own wardrobe and over one hundred bolts of fine silk. In Amenhotep III's letter to the king of Babylon, he sent along lavish beds and chairs for the new palace that the monarch had mentioned in a previous letter that he was building. Though the Egyptian king's scribe goes into great detail about the weight of gold and silver in these wood and ivory pieces, the Babylonian king was likely disappointed in the gifts, for he had asked for pure unworked gold (and lots of it) in his earlier letter.⁴³ Unlike the East Asian diplomatic letters in which the recipients always politely accept the gifts, the Amarna Letters sent to Egypt are full of complaints about the size and quality of gifts received, trying to shame the other party into more generosity (meaning more gold from Egypt).⁴⁴

At times, it seems like the desire to receive "greeting gifts" (*šulmānu*) was the main motivation for the great powers of the Near East to correspond with one another.⁴⁵ These greeting gifts could be quite substantial. The interchange appears to be how rulers obtained high-level finished luxury goods, raw materials, and draught animals that they lacked, and was basically a form of trade, represented as reciprocal gifting. The gift-giving stakes were even higher during marriage negotiations, and constituted major economic transfers of resources. Similarly, for East Asia, it has been argued that most of the Chinese silk that arrived in the Mediterranean began its journey as "gifts" given to the Xiongnu and other states in Central Asia.⁴⁶ Thus, the exchange of silk and the so-called Silk Road was just "a corollary of political interactions."⁴⁷



Figure 2.2. Detail of silver jug with goat handle, inscribed for Atumemtanab, Egypt or Levant, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1290–1224 BCE. Silver, with gold rim and handle, H 16.8 cm, from the site of Tell Basta (Bubastis), Egypt. Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 38705 and 39867, CG 53262, SR1/6609), photo courtesy of Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Photography by Ahmed Amin.

Do any of these diplomatic gifts sent between the great kings of the Near

East or the monarchs of East Asia survive for us to examine? It is possible that some of the embroidered Chinese silks found at the site of Palmyra in Syria had originally been given as gifts to the Xiongnu or other Central Asian powers.⁴⁸ For the Near East, a few dozen luxury gifts exchanged between the great kings of the Late Bronze Age survive from tombs (like that of Tutankhamen) or hoards, represented by pieces in the so-called international style.⁴⁹ Like the silver jug from Tell Basta (ancient Bubastis; [map 1.1](#)), seen in [plate 3](#) (full image) and [figure 2.2](#) (detail), these pieces are portable luxury items, decorated in a hybrid style, drawing motifs from Egyptian, Near Eastern, and Aegean traditions. For example, the upper band on the jug displays animal predator tableau common in Mesopotamian imagery, while the lower scene represents a standard Nilotic scene of fishing and fowling.⁵⁰ The inscription on the shoulder is clearly Egyptian, inscribed for Atumemtaneb (*tm-m-t3-nb*), the royal cupbearer (*wb3-nswt*), who on another vessel from the same hoard is called “king’s envoy [to] all foreign lands” (*wpw.tj-nswt-n-h3s.t-nb.t*), a type of official envoy and provincial circuit administrator who carried the pharaoh’s orders to vassal cities in Palestine and reported back on conditions.⁵¹ Thus, the envoy Atumemtaneb could have received this vessel as a gift from one of the vassal rulers in Syria-Palestine during his time there, or from the Egyptian monarch from his store of prior diplomatic gifts.

The most common motifs in the international style have been identified as hunting, animal attacks, and herbivores among lush vegetation, representing generic themes of “kingship” and “prosperity”—the perfect visual counterpart to the Amarna Letters, with their themes of a community of kings wishing each other peace and prosperity.⁵² And like the Babylonian language of the correspondence, these pieces, with their intercultural motifs, employed a visual *lingua franca* that all could appreciate and understand.

Letters sent from the imperial center to rulers of its client states followed a very different format from the great-power letters just examined. Gone are the brotherhood metaphors, elaborate salutations, and gift-giving, replaced by almost formulaic demands for submission, loyalty, and tribute. While no letters survive from the Han court to its vassals in Central Asia, there are seven letters from the Egyptian pharaoh to his vassals in Syria-Palestine.⁵³ Other than one lengthy letter of reproach sent to the double-dealing vassal ruler of Amurru ([map 1.1](#)), the letters are quite brief. After a formulaic introduction, the most frequent command is “to guard the place of the king where you are.” This is sometimes followed by orders to obey a new Egyptian commissioner or a demand for beautiful women, tribute, or manpower. The chief purpose of the vassal letters was not really diplomacy or to inquire about local conditions, for such matters were probably conducted orally by the envoys.⁵⁴ The letters close with a formulaic statement of the Egyptian king’s power.

In both the Egyptian and Chinese empires, the return letters sent to the sovereign from his client states display an extremely subservient tone, with the expected expression of loyalty and exaggerated words of praise and self-abasement, though much of this seems fairly performative. Once the formalities had been dispensed with, some vassals tended to complain quite vocally about being treated poorly or misunderstood. For example, when around 179 BCE, Zhao Tuo, the nominal vassal king of Nanyue in the far south, knew he could be attacked for arrogating the title of emperor and harassing the Han southern

frontier, he wrote to the Han emperor, referring to himself as “your aged subject Tuo, a barbarian chief” (Man-Yi *dazhang laofu chen* Tuo). He then continued, complaining that he had been unfairly slandered by the regional lord of Changsha and discriminated against by Empress Lü, who blocked his access to iron goods, and only for those reasons had violated the frontier with China.⁵⁵ Most Egyptian vassals usually wrote a short note back to the pharaoh professing loyalty and promising to obey the written orders they received to guard their city, never daring to address the king by name:

Say to the king, my lord, the sun from the sky: Message of Wiktasu, your servant. I prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, seven times and seven times. I have heard the message of the king, my lord, to me. I am indeed guarding the city of the king, my lord, until the word of the king, my lord, arrives [again].⁵⁶

The most notorious Egyptian vassal was Rib-Hadda of Byblos, who effusively professed his loyalty to pharaoh, but complained constantly about being harassed or attacked by other vassal states, begging for Egyptian military assistance.⁵⁷

THE ENVOYS

The letters between the great powers, and between each of those states and their vassals, were delivered by men we would call diplomatic messengers or envoys. With only a few exceptions, the word used to indicate an envoy in the Amarna Letters was the Babylonian term, *mār šiprim* (messenger).⁵⁸ This was related to the verb *šapāru*, which could mean “to send a message” or just “to write” or “to give orders.”⁵⁹ In the Egyptian language, the word for “envoy” was usually *wpw.tj*, derived from the word for “message,” but also related to the word for “assignment” or “expedition.” This Egyptian word is seen on a filing label written in hieratic script on a few of the Amarna Letters (see [fig. 2.1](#); third line, left), referencing the envoys who brought the letter, while in the cuneiform text itself they are called by the Babylonian term.⁶⁰ The Chinese word for “envoy” was *shizhe* (one who is sent out with commands). It was related to words meaning “to employ” and “to give orders.”

The general rule was that the more important the message, the higher the rank of the messenger. The men dispatched as envoys by the rulers of Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt and Han dynasty China usually came from the ranks of courtiers and close advisors to the sovereign, while those who participated in the delicate marriage diplomacy surveyed in the next section were often of the highest rank, since those alliances were important matters of state. For example, two high-ranking Egyptian envoys are mentioned repeatedly in the Amarna Letters as taking part in the negotiations for the marriage of the Mitanni princess Taduhepa to Amenhotep III. One was called Haaramassi in the cuneiform text of the correspondence, and described as “a magnate,” above other officials. He has been identified as the powerful southern vizier and mayor of Thebes, Ramose (*r^c-ms[jw]*), who served both Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (for a wall of his tomb, see [plate 7](#)).⁶¹ The other Egyptian envoy taking part in these negotiations was called Mane in the letters, and he can be

identified with Meniu (*mnj.w*), who held the high post of royal scribe at Amenhotep III's court.⁶²

On the Chinese side, for the marriage diplomacy with the Xiongnu (detailed in the next section), the Han court sent Liu Jing, a close advisor to Emperor Gaozu (r. 202–195 BCE) and recently enfeoffed noble, who was instrumental in key policy decisions early in the empire, such as the siting of the imperial capital.⁶³ Zhang Qian, the intrepid envoy who traveled twice to Central Asia in search of allies, was initially just a “gentleman of the palace” (*lang*; i.e., a courtier and palace guard) when he volunteered for his first mission, but was later promoted to general and ennobled for his accomplishments.⁶⁴

Men of lower status were sometimes employed for normal correspondence regarding less urgent matters, and since the envoy interchanges often served as ideological cover for trade in luxury goods and commodities, we should not be surprised that some of the men sent as envoys were actually merchants. In one letter to Akhenaten, the king of Babylon commits a slip of the tongue and refers to his regular envoy as “Salmu, the merchant.”⁶⁵ The king of Cyprus once comes out and says, “Let my messengers go promptly and safely so that I may hear my brother's greeting. These men are my merchants.”⁶⁶

Sima Qian had a very low opinion of the men who volunteered to be envoys to the Western Regions after the death of the great Zhang Qian, for he thought they were all “immoral men” (*wuxing zhi tu*), merely merchants and corrupt profiteers in disguise. He states, “The envoys were all sons of poor families who handled the government gifts and goods that were entrusted to them as though they were private property and looked for opportunities to buy goods at a cheap price in the foreign countries and make a profit on their return to China.”⁶⁷

The envoy's role was to embody the message or orders of his sovereign. Although he carried a written message, this was intended to be recited in court, either by himself or by an interpreter who accompanied him. He was also expected to explain or justify the statements of his king.⁶⁸ The Han envoys carried a staff of authority (*jie*) that marked their status and role. The Near Eastern envoys also carried some kind of tally or pass that allowed them to travel unmolested through intervening territories. From the Han sources, it appears that a Chinese envoy's role also involved lecturing the Xiongnu about Han ritual propriety and culture, which greatly annoyed the nomads. Moreover, as with diplomats past and present, an envoy acted as the eyes and ears of his ruler abroad, in other words, as a spy. In the diplomatic marriages detailed in the next section, the envoys also played a role inspecting and escorting the princesses. The pace of diplomacy in the ancient world was very slow. A single round trip could take as long as a year or more, and issues were rarely resolved in just a single exchange.

The envoys sent between Egypt or China and the other major powers were normally treated with hospitality and generosity. The envoys from the Xiongnu to the Han court were usually installed in special lodges in the capital awaiting audience. The Egyptian envoys to Babylon were frequently invited to dine personally with the king and attend court celebrations,⁶⁹ and those sent from Mitanni to Egypt were lodged in the palace.⁷⁰ Besides the gifts exchanged between the rulers, the envoys were also presented with personal gifts, such as the silver jug inscribed for Atumemtaneb (fig. 2.2; plate 3).⁷¹ The value of these

gifts might have offset the cost and hassles of the envoy's journey.

Sometimes, however, envoys could become pawns in the aggressive political and economic negotiations between rulers. The Amarna Letters narrate several incidents where Egyptian envoys were detained in Mitanni or Cyprus, or where envoys from other states were detained in Egypt for months or even years.⁷² This rarely involved actual house arrest, for under the code of conduct of the envoys, one could not leave the host country to return to one's own without the ruler's permission.⁷³ As one Near Eastern king writes, "What are messengers? Unless they are birds, are they going to fly and go away?"⁷⁴ Sometimes, the envoys were detained to exert pressure on their ruler in negotiations, but the usual response was just to detain the envoy's counterpart. For example, when Akhenaten detained the Mitanni envoys for over a year without an audience, King Tushratta of Mitanni then detained the Egyptian envoy presently at his court. In order not to break the performative fiction of the kinship framework, rulers often gave excuses for why they unfortunately had to delay the departure of envoys. Once, the Assyrian king claimed that he had to detain Akhenaten's envoys because he believed the route home to Egypt was not safe for travel.⁷⁵ Tushratta once wrote to Amenhotep III that he could not send the Egyptian envoy home, because he was not done crafting the beautiful dowry gifts he would send to him with his daughter.⁷⁶

Similar problems developed in the diplomatic negotiations between the Han and the Xiongnu. Whenever the Xiongnu detained a Han envoy, the Han likewise detained any Xiongnu envoys at their court.⁷⁷ In his letter to Emperor Wen, translated earlier, Maodun complains that his envoy has not been allowed to return from China. At one point, each side held more than ten envoys in detention.⁷⁸ According to Sima Qian, the Xiongnu often treated the Han envoys with contempt. Their court rule was to confiscate the envoy's staff of authority and tattoo him on the face like a criminal, as a condition for entering the tent of the *chanyu* for an audience. Some Han envoys accepted this indignity to obtain a direct audience, while others refused and had to meet with the ministers of the *chanyu* outside. Sima Qian also relates that the Xiongnu assumed that any learned man sent as an envoy was there to lecture them, so tried to cut him off, while a strong young man who was sent as an envoy was assumed to be an assassin, so the Xiongnu tried to "break his nerve."⁷⁹

While not as severe as the Xiongnu tradition of treating envoys like criminals, the Assyrian king once complained in a letter that his ambassadors to Akhenaten's court in his new capital were compelled to stand outside in the blistering Egyptian sun for hours on end, possibly while attending the zealous king's outdoor sun-disk rituals. "Why should messengers be made to stay constantly out in the sun and so die in the sun?" he complained.⁸⁰

Marriage Diplomacy

Interstate marriage was a type of frontier diplomacy that developed in both ancient Egypt and early China and was deeply entangled with the strategic concerns and systems of envoys, correspondence, and gifts just discussed. A diplomatic marriage is simply an arranged marriage between the ruler of one state and a child of the ruler of another.⁸¹ Used to establish alliances with peer

states and to ensure the loyalty of vassals, the practice had a long history in the Near East and East Asia as a tool to balance power relations and avoid direct armed conflict. In a time long before the era of genuine international law and enforceable treaties, marriage diplomacy relied on the universal paradigm of kinship to ensure a measure of trust and reciprocity needed for interstate agreements.

While all cultures possess some notion of marriage and affinal kinship, the actual relationships and rituals are culturally specific, and this is what leads to most of the misunderstandings or failures in the diplomatic marriage strategies at the frontier. Is each culture one that expects a bride-price or one that gives a substantial dowry? Is the patrilocal bride expected to become part of her husband's lineage or does she have a continuing relationship with her natal family? Is the bride-receiving culture polygynous or do they honor only one principal wife? What is the status of secondary wives or concubines? What are the attitudes toward cross-cultural marriage or miscegenation? Is it regarded as more prestigious to give one's daughter or to be on the receiving end of the marriage agreement? These are all issues that arise in the diplomatic marriages on the frontiers of Egypt and China.

Beyond the issue of differing perceptions of marriage in each culture, there are other topics worth examining through a cross-cultural perspective. For example, is the marriage justified and represented differently for domestic consumption to the elites than it is to the interstate community? How is the marriage related to gift-giving, tributary, or other resource acquisition processes? Is the new bride expected to assimilate into the receiving culture, or does her natal royal family expect her to be an active agent of cultural conversion or even espionage? Finally, how effective was marriage diplomacy as a strategic tool for avoiding armed conflict?

EARLY CHINA

Interstate marriages enjoyed a long history in the Chinese cultural sphere well before the establishment of the Qin empire. During the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 BCE), rival Chinese states frequently engaged in marriage agreements to reinforce strategic alliances between political equals and occasionally agreed to marry princesses from powerful non-Chinese states to the north to cement new relationships.⁸² It also appears that marriage alliances were a strong tradition among the pastoral nomads and agro-pastoralists beyond the Great Wall like the Xiongnu and their vassals in Central Asia. But it was only from the early Han imperial period (ca. 198 BCE) that the pattern of marrying out Chinese princesses to foreign rulers developed, and this subsequently became one of the standard frontier policy options for the next thousand years.

The first Han diplomatic marriage agreement was proposed under duress, after Emperor Gaozu had been soundly defeated and nearly captured in battle by the Xiongnu and their leader, Maodun. After suffering more Xiongnu incursions, Gaozu adopted in 198 BCE a proposal by his minister Liu Jing to sue for peace. The proposed policy was called *heqin*, which could be translated as “peace through kinship.” Liu Jing's proposal was an attempt to reverse the humiliating defeat by marrying out a Han princess who would hopefully be made chief consort of the *chanyu*, making the next Xiongnu ruler the grandson

of the Chinese emperor, and thus as Liu Jing argued, “making them Han subjects without a battle.”⁸³ It was also a way of masking annual tribute payments to the Xiongnu as dowry gifts and to Sinicize them by addicting them to Han goods and sending officials to educate them in ritual propriety. This deceptive face-saving spin did not fool many Han officials critical of the agreement, because the gifts in a Chinese elite marriage were supposed to flow in the other direction, from the groom’s family to the bride’s family.⁸⁴ Marriage wealth in most steppe cultures like the Xiongnu was also supposed to be transferred from the groom’s family to the bride’s family. This was clearly an appeasement payment, and acknowledging the Xiongnu as an equal brother-state was also a hard pill to swallow for the Han court. Though Emperor Gaozu adopted Liu Jing’s proposal and planned to send his eldest daughter by his principal wife, Empress Lü’s crying and pleading convinced him to substitute the daughter of a regional lord of the imperial house instead and pass her off as the eldest princess.⁸⁵

Based on descriptions of the first few *heqin* agreements between the Han and the Xiongnu, they seem to have included the following terms: (a) The Han and the Xiongnu were to be considered equal brother-states and respect each other’s sovereignty and territory; (b) the Great Wall would mark the border between the two; (c) the Han were to send a princess of the imperial house to marry the Xiongnu leader; (d) the Han were to send fixed annual quantities of clothing, foodstuffs, and other “gifts”; (e) the Xiongnu were allowed to trade at border markets; and (f) the agreement was to be renewed (and a new princess sent) whenever a new emperor or a new *chanyu* came to the throne.⁸⁶

The *heqin* treaties were negotiated between two rulers through an exchange of letters and envoys, similar to what we shall see in Egyptian marriage diplomacy. They were personal agreements, not treaties between states, so they required renewal each time a new ruler was enthroned on either side, and a new princess sent, even if this meant sending another princess to the same *chanyu*, as happened with Maodun. While the Han proponents of the policy focused on the potential benefits of the kinship part of the agreement (i.e., the potential of the Xiongnu ruler being a Han emperor’s grandson), the Xiongnu appear to have been only concerned with the economic aspects, for the largesse of gifts allowed the *chanyu* to reward his nobles to ensure their loyalty, and the border markets enabled his population to obtain needed goods like metalware.⁸⁷ The treaty was renewed nine times between 192 and 135 BCE, and each time the value of the required “gifts” was increased.⁸⁸

The Han and the Xiongnu rulers shared some perceptions concerning marriage and family, but there were also glaring incompatibilities, and these resulted in the *heqin* policy failing to accomplish what Liu Jing had envisioned. The Han emperors and the *chanyu* of the Xiongnu both engaged in polygynous marriage, having a primary consort in addition to many concubines. In the Han practice, only the eldest son of the principal empress could become the next emperor, and if he was still a minor, his mother and her clan were expected to rule as regents. In contrast, the next ruler of the Xiongnu, as with later Mongol practice, was selected on the basis of “maturity and competence” and could be any son, or even a brother, of the previous *chanyu*. He did not have to be born from the chief consort, and there was no need for empress dowager regents.⁸⁹ Thus, Liu Jing had misinterpreted Xiongnu succession patterns in his *heqin*

scheme. His plan at Sinicization also had little impact, for none of the five Han princesses sent to the Xiongnu as part of the *heqin* agreements ever made a serious political impact. And since the Xiongnu did not honor the extreme version of filial piety that the Han practiced, none of the children of these women ever felt obliged to defer to the Han emperor as “grandfather.”

Moreover, the Xiongnu, like other steppe groups, practiced a variation of levirate marriage, in which a widow was expected to marry one of her late husband’s brothers, or even his son by another woman (i.e., her own stepson). The Han found this practice incestuous and repugnant, but the Xiongnu believed that it reinforced family solidarity and kept property within the lineage.⁹⁰

After Emperor Gaozu died, his widow Empress Lü, who was ruling the empire in their son’s name, received in 192 BCE an envoy with a written marriage proposal from the elderly Maodun, suggesting that the two lonely widowed rulers should get together for their mutual benefit and pleasure.⁹¹ She viewed this as terribly insulting and wanted to launch an attack on the Xiongnu, but her ministers advised her that the Han were still militarily too weak. To fend off his proposal, Empress Lü replied that she was old and unsteady, and her teeth and hair had fallen out. If she had accepted the proposal, it would have basically meant Han surrender, for Maodun would have become the Chinese emperor following kinship rules common to both sides. That may have been exactly what he intended, but it is impossible to determine if it was a taunt or a serious proposal. But, clearly, Maodun was following the standard levirate marriage custom of his people in trying to marry his “brother’s” widow.⁹²

In terms of suitability, the Xiongnu apparently had no problems marrying or having sexual relations with a woman from the Han, but it is crucial to note that the Han never asked for a Xiongnu princess to marry the emperor or his sons, even when they later obtained the upper hand in their relationship, nor would they have likely accepted one if she had been offered.

Diplomatic marriages between peer polities, usually expressed in diplomatic correspondence as “brother” states, were different in nature and terms from marriages arranged between imperial powers and one of their vassals. For the seven decades of the *heqin* agreements, the Xiongnu and the Han were considered peer-polities (“brother-states”), though it could be contested who was the “elder brother” in this agreement. To see how Han marriage diplomacy worked with a vassal polity in Central Asia, we need to turn to the case of the *heqin* marriages arranged with the Wusun people.

The Wusun were a group of horse-riding, nomadic pastoralists who lived somewhere in the Ili River valley, near the border between present-day China and Kazakhstan ([map 1.2](#)). They were a large, powerful group, for the Han estimated their population at over six hundred thousand. Once close vassals of the Xiongnu, they had become largely autonomous by the middle of the second century BCE.⁹³

Zhang Qian had learned about the Wusun people during his first trip to the west (ca. 138–126 BCE).⁹⁴ Later, when the Xiongnu vassal king occupying the Hexi Corridor surrendered to the Han in 121 BCE, and his people had been relocated, Zhang Qian suggested to Emperor Wu that the Wusun could be convinced to return to their old homeland in Hexi—and oppose any Xiongnu

resurgence—if they were offered generous gifts and a brother-state marriage alliance. Emperor Wu agreed and sent Zhang Qian west to Wusun territory, between 118 and 115 BCE, along with three hundred men and numerous gifts.⁹⁵ Zhang Qian proposed the marriage alliance and brother-state status, offering a Han princess to the leader of the Wusun, called the *kunmo*. Wusun leadership was fractured into three groups at the time, so the *kunmo* could not make a commitment, but the Wusun definitely had no intention of returning east. They did send envoys back to the Han court with a gift of horses, and once they saw the magnificence of the capital of Chang'an, and subsequently felt renewed threats from the Xiongnu, they became quite desirous of the marriage alliance.

The Han ministers held a court conference to debate the proposed marriage alliance. They gave the emperor their endorsement, but only if the Wusun sent a proper bridal gift, unlike the improper and asymmetrical “gifts” that the Han had sent to the Xiongnu along with the Han princesses. The Wusun sent a massive gift of one thousand horses, which was probably instrumental in populating the stud farms that Emperor Wu was establishing in the northwest to bolster the cavalry war against the Xiongnu.

The princess the emperor chose to marry to the Wusun leader was Liu Xijun, an orphan from a disgraced branch of the imperial family.⁹⁶ Her father, Liu Jian, had been regional lord of Jiangdu (r. 127–121 BCE). He was a cruel, perverted man, who committed suicide in 121 BCE after his plot of rebellion was disclosed.⁹⁷ Her mother had been executed for witchcraft directed against the emperor in the same year. Sending Princess Xijun to marry a foreign ruler was a type of punishment in exile, and since she had no living parents, it ensured that she could bring no further shame to her family by barbarizing herself.

Sometime around 105 BCE, she was sent to the Western Regions in an imperial carriage with a staff of several hundred eunuchs, along with a bounty of gifts to bestow upon Wusun nobles. Her life in Wusun was quite miserable. Her husband was old, and they could not understand each other's speech. She lived in a separate yurt and only saw him once or twice a year. She was appointed as his Consort of the Right, but shortly after her betrothal, the Xiongnu tried to counter the Han alliance and sent another bride to the Wusun, who was named Consort of the Left, a higher-ranking position. Princess Xijun composed a famous poem lamenting her situation that is reproduced in *History of the Han*. This became the fountainhead of a genre of poetry (much of it spurious), which laments the life of the princesses wedded to foreign rulers, beyond the pale of civilization.

My family married me out to the other side of heaven;
They sent me far off to a stranger state, to the king of the Wusun.
A domed hut became my chamber, its walls made of felt;
I take meat for my meals, *kumiss* as my broth.
Living with constant thoughts of my homeland,
My heart is wounded inside;
I wish I were a golden swan, returning to its old homestead.⁹⁸

To add to the indignities of Princess Xijun's situation, her aged husband then

asked her to marry his grandson and heir. She wrote a letter pleading to Emperor Wu to prevent this, but he instructed her that she must observe Wusun customs, so the marriage was consummated. She may have been somewhat more satisfied by this later union, however, for she bore a daughter. Princess Xijun died shortly after, around 101 BCE.

To maintain the marriage alliance with the Wusun and to counter the Xiongnu consort who remained, Emperor Wu chose another princess from another disgraced branch of the imperial family to marry the now-widowed *kunmo*. Liu Jieyou (121–49 BCE) was the granddaughter of Liu Wu, who had been regional lord of Chu (r. 174–154 BCE) and had committed suicide after his failed rebellion.

By every measure, Princess Jieyou's sojourn in the Western Regions was much more successful than that of her ill-fated predecessor, and she apparently took her political role very seriously. She spent nearly fifty years as the chief-consort to three successive Wusun rulers, giving birth to four sons and two daughters, many of whom held powerful positions in Wusun or were married to rulers of other Central Asian polities. While in Wusun, Princess Jieyou kept the Han court apprised of political developments and Xiongnu military movements, and on one occasion in 72 BCE, successfully petitioned the Han to launch a joint cavalry attack on the Xiongnu. She also became embroiled in Wusun court intrigue, attempting to assassinate her third husband, who was cruel and deranged. When she was seventy years old, she petitioned the emperor and was allowed to return to the Han capital. She died a few years later, and was buried with the ritual afforded to a true daughter of an emperor because of her loyal service.⁹⁹

Even though the envoy Zhang Qian characterized the Han-Wusun alliance as one between brothers (*kundi*), much like the *heqin* agreements with the Xiongnu, a few features demonstrate that this was actually an asymmetrical relationship between an imperial power and a vassal state. First, beginning with the marriage alliance involving Princess Jieyou, the Wusun leader was also required to send a prince to be a hostage in Chang'an, where he would reside with the other hostage princes of vassals from the Western Regions, to be educated in Han fashion.¹⁰⁰ The requirement to send hostage princes is also seen in the Egyptian marriage alliances with client states and was meant to serve as a guarantee of good conduct. Second, the enormous size of the bride-price for the hand of the Princess Xijun, numbering one thousand horses, would have been interpreted by the Han court as a tribute offering. Furthermore, the Han tried to use the promise of further marriages to Wusun leaders as a lever to interfere in the succession of that state, for around 60 BCE, the emperor recalled a princess and her entourage full of gifts that had already been dispatched toward Central Asia when the Wusun reneged on their promise to install a pro-Chinese heir (a son of Princess Jieyou), installing the son of a Xiongnu consort instead.¹⁰¹

While some Han ministers opposed the Wusun marriage alliances, the agreement was beneficial to both sides. It allowed the Han to maintain a balance of power in the region and counter the Xiongnu threat, while enabling a steady supply of much-needed horses from a friendly source. The exchange of hostage Wusun princes and Han princesses (who could be interpreted as another form of hostage) also ensured good behavior on both sides and

promised assistance in times of military threat.¹⁰² Finally, the generous gifts distributed by the princesses resident in Wusun helped to cement pro-Han factions at the Wusun court and acculturate them by familiarizing them with Han luxuries.

NEW KINGDOM EGYPT

Royal diplomatic marriages enjoyed a long history in the ancient Near East, but for most of its history, Egypt does not seem to have participated in this tradition.¹⁰³ When pharaoh's armies marched into the Levant, Egypt joined the greater Near Eastern diplomatic world, becoming a member of the so-called Great Powers Club that included the Mitanni, the Hittites, and Babylon. The rules of the marriage alliance game were already established, like the envoy-correspondence diplomacy outlined earlier, so Egypt was expected to play by them.¹⁰⁴ However, Egypt brought to the table different perceptions of the role of political marriage that led to some stark misunderstandings.

From the sources, it appears that the most prolific practitioner of diplomatic marriage in New Kingdom Egypt was the long-reigning pharaoh, Amenhotep III, father of Akhenaten. In his nearly forty years on the throne, he negotiated to marry two princesses from Babylon, two from Mitanni, one from Arzawa, and probably several from Egyptian client-states in the Levant. None of these brides ever held the title of great royal wife (*ḥm.t-nswt-wr.t*), for that position was already filled by the powerful and long-lived Tiy (*ty*), who wielded unprecedented power at court for at least two reigns.

Let us look in detail at his first marriage to a Mitannian princess, for the sources allow us to view how he represented this marriage to his corresponding king in Mitanni and contrast this with how he presented it to the Egyptian elite at home. The kingdom of Mitanni, also called Naharin in the Egyptian sources, was located in present-day Kurdistan and Syria, at the northern end of the Tigris and Euphrates corridor of Mesopotamia ([map 1.1](#)). Scholars believe it was founded by a recently arrived Indo-Aryan warrior elite over an indigenous Hurrian-speaking population. Thutmose III had encroached upon their territory and fought with them in his campaigns as far as the Euphrates, but after decades of intermittent war, peace was finally achieved under Thutmose IV (r. ca. 1399–1389 BCE), who secured a marriage alliance with King Artatama, marrying his daughter. Mitanni occupied an important strategic position for Egypt, because they provided a buffer against the growing power of the Hittites and Assyrians and cemented Egyptian territorial gains in Palestine and Lebanon.

In the tenth year of his reign (ca. 1380 BCE), Amenhotep married Gilukhepa (Egyptian: *kyrgypꜣ*), the daughter of King Shuttarna II of Mitanni, and the sister of the succeeding king, Tushratta. The union is mentioned in no fewer than six of the Amarna Letters and on a series of commemorative scarabs commissioned by Amenhotep III.

From contemporaneous letters and later recapitulations, it appears that the marriage negotiations began with a request from Amenhotep III for a daughter of the Mitannian king. Though the two kings corresponded directly, these letters were brought by high officials serving as envoys who conducted the actual negotiations, giving and receiving lavish gifts with each trip abroad. As

part of the marriage negotiations, it appears that the Mitanni repeatedly denied the request, before finally assenting to the union.¹⁰⁵ Then, in an anointing ritual which appears to be of Near Eastern origin, oil was poured over the new bride's head in the presence of Egyptian envoys.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, a very generous bride-price was negotiated, consisting of large amounts of Egyptian gold.¹⁰⁷ An equally generous dowry was negotiated from the bride's family, consisting of thousands of items of gilded furniture, jewelry, weapons, and horses.¹⁰⁸ After she arrived in Egypt at the head of a huge entourage and joint-military escort, Gilukhepa's dowry would have been presented for the Egyptian officials to inspect.¹⁰⁹

Just as we saw in the Han interactions with the Wusun, the strategic marriage alliances between Mitanni and Egypt appear to have given ideological cover to an important material exchange. Egypt and her all-important new cavalry were in constant need of horses, for just as the horse was not native to Han China, horses did not flourish in the climate of Egypt either and had to be imported from further north. The Mitanni elite were master horse-and-chariot men, and nearly every gift exchange between the Mitanni court and Egypt involved a gift of Mitanni horses and chariot gear in exchange for Egyptian gold (taken from Nubia), which the Mitanni kings remarked was "as common as dirt in Egypt."¹¹⁰

The marriage to Gilukhepa, which was secured with elaborate pleading and negotiations (and a king's ransom in gold), was presented very differently to the Egyptian elite audience. Sometime around year eleven of his reign, Amenhotep III commissioned a large number of carved steatite scarabs with inscribed texts that commemorated the great deeds in his first decade on the throne.¹¹¹ Hundreds of examples of these survive today, testifying to their wide distribution, found as far away as Syria and the Sudan. The most common ones describe the more than one hundred lions he killed "with his own arrows," while another group records the equally manly feat of slaying ninety-six wild bulls. Many surviving examples proclaim the name of his principal wife, Tiy, and also mention her parents Yuya (ywjꜣ) and Tyuyu (twjꜣ), who must have been quite powerful as well, given that they were buried in the Valley of the Kings.¹¹² Five known examples mention the arrival of Gilukhepa in year ten of Amenhotep's reign:

Year 10 (ca. 1380 BCE) under the majesty of Mighty-Bull-Appearing-in-Truth, Who-Establishes-Laws-and-Pacifies-the-Two-Lands, Great-of-Strength, Smiter-of-Asiatics, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of Action, Nebmaatre, Chosen of Re, Son of Re, *Amenhotep*, Ruler of Thebes, granted life, and of the great royal wife, Tiy, may she live.

The name of her father is Yuya. The name of her mother is Tyuyu.

The wonders that were brought back to his majesty—life, prosperity, and health—were the daughter of Shuttarna, the prince of Naharin (i.e., Mitanni), Gilukhepa, and the choicest of her female entertainers, [a total of] 317 women.¹¹³

In this widely disseminated royal inscription, no actual marriage to Gilukhepa is mentioned, nor is she referred to as "wife." The great royal wife, Tiy, is the only wife mentioned, and even Tiy's parents get higher billing than

Gilukhepa. The Mitannian princess is only listed as a “wonder” that “was brought back” by the king. The basic form of the verb translated here as “brought back” (*jnl*), is often used to mean “carry off” or “lead away as booty” in conquest inscriptions,¹¹⁴ and the noun form, *jn.w*, means “tribute” from a foreign power.¹¹⁵ So, it is clear that to the Egyptian elite audience, Gilukhepa was represented as tribute taken from a vassal.

It is uncertain what happened to Gilukhepa after she arrived in Egypt. She certainly did not become great royal wife or ever supplant the position of Tiye. But she also does not appear to have disappeared completely into the large royal harem system as happened with one of Amenhotep’s Babylonian brides, for her brother, the Mitannian king Tushratta, kept sending her gifts and well-wishes in his diplomatic correspondence.¹¹⁶ As far as we know, she did not write any poetic laments of her time in Egypt, like those composed by Princess Xijun of the Han, but neither was she drinking fermented mare’s milk in a yurt on the steppe. She arrived with hundreds of handmaidens and an enormous dowry, so it is likely that she was established in her own palace compound, complete with servants, fields, and textile workshops, and assigned a majordomo, entitled “great one of the house of the noble lady of Mitanni.”¹¹⁷

Regardless of the different way that the Mitannian marriages were represented to the partner state (“becoming one family”) as opposed to the Egyptian audience (“bringing tribute”), the strategic value of the marriage alliance was readily apparent. Not only did Egypt receive a regular supply of horses and chariot equipment, but just one year into the marriage, when the Hittites were threatening the northern frontier, it appears that Egyptian and Mitanni forces fought alongside one another in a joint engagement, successfully repelling a Hittite advance.¹¹⁸ This was reminiscent of the joint Wusun-Han foray against a Xiongnu incursion into the Western Regions in 72 BCE, engineered by the politically savvy Princess Jieyou.

Twenty years into the marriage, we know Gilukhepa was still alive, since the king of Mitanni sent her gifts, but around this same time, Amenhotep III began negotiating with Mitanni for a new bride. This was not just because he wanted a fresh face in his harem; as with the Han *heqin* agreements with the Xiongnu and the Wusun, the marriage alliance with Mitanni was a personal agreement between sovereigns and required renewal each time a new king came to the throne on either side. After Shuttarna II of Mitanni had died, his son Tushratta, Gilukhepa’s brother, had succeeded him, apparently after a violent struggle.¹¹⁹ Egyptian-Mitannian relations had cooled in the first decade of Tushratta’s reign, but the Hittites were again threatening the northern frontier, so Tushratta proposed a marriage alliance to rekindle the old alliance. Negotiations preceded with a few bumps in the road, and involved the usual gifts of Mitanni horses and haggling over the amount and quality of Egyptian gold.¹²⁰

As noted earlier, the powerful vizier Ramose appears to have conducted some of the negotiations in person. The new bride, Taduhepa, entered Egypt by at least the thirty-sixth year of Amenhotep III’s reign, along with an enormous dowry and the gift of a statue of the Hurrian-Hittite goddess of love Shaushka (i.e., Ishtar) to protect her and make her attractive to her aged husband (referred to in the letter depicted in [fig. 2.1](#)).¹²¹ But shortly thereafter, the old pharaoh died (ca. 1349 BCE), and Taduhepa was required to marry his son

Amenhotep IV (i.e., Akhenaten) to continue the marriage alliance, in a move reminiscent of the levirate marriage required of Princess Jieyou of the Han, who married three successive Wusun rulers.¹²² After this, though, we do not hear more about Taduhepa in Egyptian sources. Some scholars theorize that Taduhepa reappears at Akhenaten's court as the "great beloved wife," Kiya, the most prominent of Akhenaten's secondary wives and possible biological mother of Tutankhamen. Kiya is not a usual Egyptian name, and her title of great beloved wife is unique. Both could indicate foreign origin.¹²³

The characteristics seen in the Mitanni marriage alliances of Amenhotep III reveal the same broad pattern observed in Egyptian diplomatic marriages with the other Great Powers in the Near East during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. The marriage cements a political alliance as a personal agreement between kings that maintains a balance of power and avoids war, and it involves long drawn-out negotiations over gifts and dowries, whose enormous value indicate a significant exchange of valuable resources.

Though Egypt largely observed the rules of this international game, Amenhotep III makes a very striking statement in his negotiations with the Babylonian king, which highlights a key difference in how the Egyptians viewed these marriages compared to the view from the Hittite, Babylonian, or Mitanni side. During negotiations to marry a daughter of Kadašman-Enlil I, the Babylonian king requested to marry a daughter of Amenhotep III as well, to demonstrate the reciprocity expected among the "brother kings." But Amenhotep III curtly replied, "From time immemorial, no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to anyone." The Babylonian king could not understand pharaoh's rudeness and obstinacy, and so requested that Amenhotep III just "send me a beautiful woman as if she were your daughter. Who is going to say, 'She is no daughter of the king!'"¹²⁴ The pharaoh also refused.

This exchange highlights a key difference in perception between Egypt and the other Near Eastern powers regarding diplomatic marriage. For most of the Near Eastern powers, to give one's daughter in marriage to another ruler was to make him one's son-in-law, subordinating him, at least at the kinship level. Egypt, in contrast, viewed sending one's daughter to another ruler as the demeaning and submissive act of a vassal, an intolerable loss of face. In contrast, they viewed acquiring the daughters of other rulers as a conqueror's action of securing tribute. Samuel Meier sums up the misunderstanding well: "Where Egypt regularly receives princesses in marriage as an expression of sovereignty, the other players regularly give princesses in marriage as an expression of sovereignty."¹²⁵

The marriages among the sovereigns of the Great Powers Club, with their elaborate gift-giving rituals, scurrying envoys, and negotiations over bride-price and dowry, were very different in nature from the marriages arranged between Egypt and its vassals in Syria-Palestine. The power relations were very asymmetrical here, and there was no longer the fiction of being brothers. The sending of brides from the vassal states to serve in the pharaoh's harem was portrayed as required tribute, both in the written diplomatic correspondence of the Amarna Letters and in the commemorative inscriptions of the Egyptian court. If the Egyptian ruler wanted a daughter of a vassal for his harem, he just demanded her. For example, one pharaoh wrote through his envoy to a vassal, "Prepare your daughter for the king, your lord, and prepare the contributions:

twenty first-class slaves, silver, chariots, and first-class horses.”¹²⁶ The Egyptian king still got a bride and fine horses and chariots, as in the Mitanni marriages, but he did not have to negotiate nor send any gold. The vassal marriages were closely related to the system of hostage sons, whereby the vassal rulers of city-states in the Egyptian Levantine empire were required to send their sons to Egypt as hostages as part of their oath of submission and loyalty.¹²⁷ Presentation of all sorts of tribute, including hostage sons of Levantine vassals, is depicted on the wall of a tomb of one of Akhenaten’s courtiers (fig. 2.3). The sons were to be educated in Egypt, often training in the army, and held under house arrest until a pharaoh wanted to place them on the throne of their father, hopefully as a sympathetic, Egyptian-speaking, vassal.¹²⁸ As we saw earlier, the Han empire required the same provisions in its diplomatic marriages with the Wusun.

When these daughters of the rulers of the Levantine cities were recorded in the Egyptian sources, they appear on lists of war booty and tribute, along with livestock and precious objects.¹²⁹ However, it does appear that some of them lived fairly comfortably in the harem and were counted among the king’s consorts, for the “Tomb of the Three Princesses” in Egypt revealed the lavishly adorned mummies of three ladies named, “the king’s wife (*hm.t-nswt*) Manhata,” “the king’s wife Maruta (i.e., Martha),” and “the king’s wife Manuwai,” who were part of the harem of Thutmose III. Their West Semitic-derived names indicate that they were probably the daughters of Syrian vassals.¹³⁰

The giving and taking of women as brides was thus an important tool of foreign relations in the early imperial phase of both Han China and New Kingdom Egypt. Marriages were used between potentially hostile peer-polities, such as between the Han and the Xiongnu or between Egypt and the Mitanni, Babylonian, or Hittite kingdoms to stabilize relations and avert all-out war. In a sense, it was a kind of ritual war of diplomatic negotiations that could substitute for and avert real war.¹³¹

In both East Asia and the Near East, the diplomatic marriages between the great powers were framed in terms of a kinship paradigm, with the kings calling each other brothers, since this was the most logical model to express the type of reciprocity and trust expected from these alliances. Negotiating these marriage alliances involved an elaborate game, in which both sides apparently interpreted the rules slightly differently, with multiple trips by high-ranking envoys bearing increasingly lavish gifts and counter proposals. The peer-polity marriage alliances in both empires constituted agreements between sovereigns, and not modern-style treaties between states, and thus had to be renewed with a new marriage each time a new sovereign came to the throne of either kingdom. The amazingly valuable bride-prices (in Egyptian gold or Wusun horses), and the equally expensive dowries (of Chinese brocade silks and Mitanni horse and chariot teams) were represented as reciprocal gift-giving, but actually provided ideological cover for what were trade transactions in needed resources toward each side.

In relations between China and its vassal states in Central Asia, as with those between Egypt and its vassals in Syria-Palestine, marriage diplomacy could be employed alongside the system of hostage princes to ensure the submission and loyalty of the vassal states. The case of the Han diplomatic

marriages with the Wusun was located somewhere in between these two types, since the rhetoric of the envoy communications represented the marriages as a brother alliance, yet the requirement of holding Wusun princes as hostages in the Han capital clearly revealed that the Wusun were treated more like a vassal than a peer.



Figure 2.3. Presentation of tribute, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1338 BCE. Carved limestone, east wall of the Tomb of Meryra II, Tell el-Amarna site, Egypt. From Davies, *Rock Tombs*, vol. 2, plate XXXVII.

The direction in which princesses traveled was certainly the key difference between diplomatic marriages in the Egyptian New Kingdom empire and those of the Chinese empire. Except in times of extreme dynastic weakness, it was as Amenhotep III said to the Babylonian king, “no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to anyone.” While the Near Eastern kings with whom they corresponded were content to exchange daughters to cement their fictitious brotherhood and obtain lavish gifts, the Egyptian king wanted to collect the daughters of other rulers as tribute, just as he collected precious materials like lapis lazuli or exotic animals. To take other men’s daughters as prizes was an emblem of strength. The tributary model was so entrenched in the king of Egypt’s head that sending his daughter to the harem of another man could only be interpreted as submission to a foreign power.

While the ideology of kingship and sovereignty in both Egypt and China shared the core concept that each was the center of the civilized world and tribute flowed toward the center from an uncivilized periphery, distinct cultural patterns of kinship and attitudes toward women and sex created an anomaly in the Chinese enactment of the tributary model. Chinese emperors of the Han never took foreign princesses as brides or concubines, either from their geopolitical peers, like the Xiongnu, or from any tributary client state. A perusal of later historical records demonstrates that this pattern was usually maintained for later native Chinese dynasties as well, including the Song and Ming courts. Only with the Manchu-led Qing dynasty (1636–1912) do we hear stories of emperors taking concubines from Central Asia, the most famous being Rong Fei (the basis of the Xiang Fei legend), who for a time enraptured the Qianlong Emperor.

I do not believe that this was just a sexual aversion about miscegenation with foreign women, but was related to the particular nature of consort-family power during the Han period. Both the Egyptian and Chinese rulers practiced a system of polygyny, keeping large harems of secondary wives and concubines for procreation and ornament, but marrying only one principal wife, usually drawn from powerful domestic clans, or in the case of Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, their own half-sisters or full sisters. When the Han emperor brought a woman into his harem, whether as an empress or a secondary wife, her family’s status was elevated and her father and brothers were often given high official

positions. If such a woman were to give birth to the next emperor, she would have exercised considerable power over the new emperor due to the dictates of filial piety. Allowing foreign consort families such proximity to the handles of powers would have been unacceptable to those who already had a stake in the game.

There were other features of the Chinese kinship model that could explain the Han imperial practice of giving brides to foreign rulers but not taking them. In the basic form of Chinese patrilocal kinship, daughters were never permanent members of their natal families, for when they married, they became part of their husband's lineage and gave sacrifice to his ancestors. Since the daughters of the imperial house were already destined to become members of another man's family, having one marry out to cement an important political alliance was probably viewed as only a minor sacrifice. Of course, the Han emperors were not entirely willing to give up their own biological daughters in the marriage alliances with barbarian rulers, usually substituting a girl from a collateral and disgraced branch of the imperial line. These women would not only be required to live in what the Chinese considered barbarous conditions, but also to follow local levirate marriage customs, which they considered incestuous.

Resource Diplomacy

While the two modes of diplomacy surveyed in this chapter both involved some element of material exchange, in the form of lavish gifts, bride-prices, or dowries, they were also embedded in other important strategic concerns, usually involving a balance-of-powers equation. Sometimes, however, the desire for a particular raw material or animal resource was the key driving factor behind the diplomatic maneuvering. Mario Liverani employs a modified version of Karl Polanyi's model of economic relations to analyze the nature of material exchanges in international relations in the ancient Near East.¹³² He argues that the true nature of economic exchanges at the frontiers of early empires is almost completely lost to us, because all that remain are the representations of these exchanges in written sources, which have cloaked the exchanges in one of two ideological covers, redistribution (i.e., tribute) or reciprocity (i.e., gifts). These are the only two valid and valued ways to represent a transfer of goods between polities in the ancient world. Purchase or barter are just too unseemly to represent as such in written sources, except those of an administrative nature. As we saw earlier, the same transaction can be represented using either of the two modes, depending on the audience, just as the marriage of Gilukhepa was represented to the Mitanni audience as a reciprocal exchange of a daughter for marriage gifts, while it was represented to the Egyptian elite as acquiring a woman from a vassal as tribute. The following cases of resource diplomacy from each empire illustrate some of these issues.

THE CEDAR OF LEBANON

While ancient Egypt was abundant in agricultural resources and wildlife, thanks to the lifegiving Nile, and had plentiful building materials in stone for

monumental construction, it lacked a good source of high-quality timber. Native trees like sycamore, tamarisk, and acacia were available in stands along the Nile, but they did not produce the fine, large planks needed for elite coffins and palace architecture, nor the tall straight masts required for large sailing vessels. Since the earliest dynasties, Egypt looked to the forests of Lebanon for its high-quality lumber, such as the highly-prized cedar, but also pine, juniper, and fir. The ancient seaport of Byblos, present-day Jubayl (forty-two kilometers north of Beirut) was the key site for obtaining access to this wood.¹³³ Byblos was the Greek name for the place (meaning “papyrus scroll”), but it was known in Egyptian sources as *kbnj* or *kpnj*, and in the Amarna Letters as *gubla*.

The site was home to the important temple of Ba'alat Gebal (“Mistress of Byblos”), the local manifestation of Astarte, whom the Egyptians equated with their goddess, Hathor. It appears that the kings of the Old Kingdom had developed a reciprocal relationship with Byblos in which they donated valuable gifts to the Ba'alat Gebal temple in exchange for donations of cedar wood from the goddess. Statues and vessels of several rulers of the Egyptian Fourth to Sixth Dynasties have been found in the ruins of the temple, and Egyptian royal tombs, coffins, and solar boats since the earliest dynasties used cedar timbers that likely came from Byblos.¹³⁴ It has been noted that this reciprocal exchange was not presented as one between the Egyptian ruler and the king of Byblos, but rather one with the Mistress of Byblos, an Egyptian goddess in local guise, thereby masking any commercial connotations of trade with an inferior partner.¹³⁵

The fortunes of Byblos waxed and waned with those of Egypt, and after destructions and a lull in relations during the First Intermediate Period, Byblos flourished again during the Middle Kingdom, when local rulers sometimes wrote in the hieroglyphic script, called themselves by the Egyptian term “local prince” (i.e., mayor; *h3.tj-'*), and buried themselves in lavish tombs that included fine Egyptian objects. While the relationship between Middle Kingdom Egypt and Byblos appeared to be peaceful and reciprocal, with cedar flowing toward Egypt as recompense for lavish patronage of the goddess, contemporary Egyptian inscriptions portrayed the exchange as a tributary relationship and cursed Byblos in “execration texts” as a typical Asiatic barbarian enemy.¹³⁶

Byblos was one of Egypt's key vassal states during the New Kingdom after it solidified control over its Levantine empire. Thutmose III reports that he requisitioned tons of cedar from Byblos to build the ships that he would drag overland and use to surprise the Mitanni in his crossing of the Euphrates in his eighth campaign.¹³⁷ But while some inscriptions mention an annual tribute of cedar from Byblos, other sources from Thutmose III's reign confirm that Egypt still made offerings of valuable objects to the Mistress of Byblos and received the timber as a reciprocal gift, to be used for the construction at the temple of Amun at Karnak.¹³⁸ So, even though the political reality had changed and Byblos was now Egypt's vassal, the economic reality of the exchange had not substantially changed.

In the later Amarna Letters, Rib-Hadda, the ruler of Byblos, was the most frequent letter writer to Amenhotep III and his son, Akhenaten. He complained constantly of the depredations of the upstart rulers of Amurru, but Akhenaten ignored most of his warnings. Rib-Hadda probably felt that Egypt was not

holding up its end of the bargain, nor protecting his position, so when Akhenaten requested boxwood lumber from him, he said it was not possible to obtain any, but hinted that the transaction might be possible if Egypt came through with lavish gifts and an armed garrison.¹³⁹ Byblos was eventually lost to the Egyptian empire and fell under the Hittite sphere of influence. Control was reestablished during the Nineteenth Dynasty under Seti I (r. ca. 1301–1290 BCE), but the entire Egyptian Levantine empire definitively collapsed during the Twentieth and Twenty-First Dynasties, and Byblos once again became independent of Egypt.

This change of affairs is seen clearly in the fictional account known as *The Report of Wenamen*, set in the reign of the powerless Ramesses XI (r. ca. 1115–1086 BCE), when real power in Egypt was split between the Amun priesthood at Thebes and a warlord named Nesbanebdjed (Smendes) in the Delta.¹⁴⁰ An envoy named Wenamen (*wn-jmn*) was sent by Herihor, the high priest of Amun, to obtain cedar from the ruler of Byblos to rebuild the sacred boat used to transport the cult statue of the god Amun. He was given a small number of gifts in precious metals to give to the rulers of the Lebanese cities on his route, but these were stolen by a passenger on his chartered ship. Though he seized some silver in compensation from another person, he still arrived in Byblos with no lavish gifts, no credentials, nor any impressive entourage, so the ruler, Zeker-Ba'al, gave him no respect, sending a messenger to tell Wenamen every day to “get out of my harbor!” Through some divine intervention, he eventually obtained an audience, then requested in high-minded fashion that Byblos donate the cedar to the god Amun, who would repay him with divine favor. Zeker-Ba'al, however, insisted that Wenamen had to pay for the timber, just as his predecessors had done with ships full of valuable items. Moreover, he brought out old account books to prove his point. The Mistress of Byblos is not mentioned in the story at all. Eventually, Wenamen had to write back to Egypt to obtain more presents, and the timber was felled for him, and ships provided to transport his wood back to Egypt. On the way home, he was shipwrecked on Cyprus, and the manuscript ends abruptly. Though the work is obviously a literary fiction, *The Report of Wenamen* illustrates the lowered status of Egypt by the early eleventh century BCE in its negotiations to obtain the desired cedar wood from Lebanon, compared to the heyday of its empire, when Egypt was the strongest power in the Near East.

THE HEAVENLY HORSES OF DAYUAN

Just as Egypt was deficient in high-quality wood, horses were not native to China and did not thrive there, especially in the south. Horses had to be raised in frontier areas and imported. The breed of horse that was native to the frontier steppe was the Mongolian pony, a short and sturdy breed which is depicted in the First Emperor of Qin's terracotta army. During his war with the Xiongnu, Emperor Wu sought to build a cavalry army capable of defeating the nomads, so he established a network of stud farms in frontier provinces to breed tens of thousands of horses. When Zhang Qian made Emperor Wu aware of the swift and majestic horses of the Wusun people, and Han China acquired some of these during diplomatic negotiations, Emperor Wu called them “heavenly horses” (*tianma*), suggesting that they were from a celestial realm.

Later, the emperor learned of the even more extraordinary “blood-sweating” horses of the populous state of Dayuan ([map 1.2](#)). He labeled these the true heavenly horses instead, greatly desiring to acquire some.

While most scholars have stressed the military needs behind Emperor Wu’s obsession with these horses, Arthur Waley argues that the emperor did not want these horses to bolster his cavalry, but to achieve immortality for himself, for he believed these horses were truly divine and could transport him to a celestial realm where he could obtain an immortal elixir.¹⁴¹ Regardless of his motivation, acquiring the horses proved very difficult. Dayuan was five thousand kilometers away from the capital of Chang’an, even further than the remote Wusun territory. Around 107 BCE, Emperor Wu sent envoys with lavish gifts, including a thousand gold ingots and a golden horse statue, to give to the Dayuan ruler, hoping to receive some of the “heavenly horses” in exchange. Perhaps, with the gift of the golden horse, the Han hoped to construct a religious framework for the exchange, like that which occurred between Egypt and the Mistress of Byblos. However, because of its great distance from China, Dayuan was ignorant of Han power and did not treat China as a superior, or even a peer polity, for interaction. They also valued their horses as a “treasure” of the state. Decorum broke down in the negotiations and the Han envoys cursed the king, smashed the statue, and left. Dayuan subsequently had the envoys murdered and stole the gifts.

Unlike the situation with the disrespected Egyptian envoy, Wenamen, Chinese officials were not in a weak position, struggling to acquire what their ruler wanted. The breakdown of diplomacy actually led to a huge military mobilization in China to conquer Dayuan and obtain the horses through force. Between 104 and 101 BCE, the general Li Guangli led two long-distance campaigns to Dayuan.¹⁴² The second mobilized sixty thousand men, thirty thousand horses, and over one hundred thousand pack animals. This campaign eventually subdued Dayuan and obtained three thousand of its horses, though the Han lost more than three-fourths of their men. The awesome demonstration of Han power in the defeat of Dayuan had enormous imperial repercussions, for it intimidated all the surrounding states, who consequently offered submission and hostage princes to the Han. For more than a century after the initial conquest, Dayuan was required to send two heavenly horses per year to the Han court.¹⁴³ This has recently been confirmed by administrative texts unearthed at the postal station site of Xuanquanzhi ([map 1.2](#)), where one wooden board states that a major Han official would go to greet the Dayuan envoys and escort the horses to the capital.¹⁴⁴ This is similar to the effect of Thutmose III’s solidification of the Egyptian empire in the Levant and Nubia, acquiring precious resources through tribute, which formerly had to be purchased or negotiated through gift exchanges, but one could argue that the price in human lives and resources to conquer these empires and secure the resources as tribute was far more costly than the prior method of acquisition through reciprocal gift exchanges.

Conclusion

The Han Chinese empire and the New Kingdom Egyptian empire correspond

closely in a number of areas. Both empires were comprised of certain territories that were targeted for complete colonization and assimilation (e.g., Nubia, Nanyue), administered under the normal structure of the imperial core, while other territories, often physically distant or structurally different in their economic basis (e.g., Levant, the Western Regions), were administered as a network of vassal states, overseen by circuit attendants and military garrisons. In each empire, the vassal states were required to submit hostage princes to the capital and provide manpower and material tribute, but were allowed a measure of autonomy regarding cultural and economic matters.

These vassals also served as a buffer zone between Egypt or China and other peer polities in the region, such as the Mitanni kingdom or the Xiongnu. Interstate diplomacy with these other great powers, designed to avert war and obtain needed resources, was also exceptionally similar in the two regions. In both, a kinship metaphor of brotherhood and reciprocity characterized the interaction, as royal envoys carried gifts and written letters (with very similar formats) between the two courts. Both empires also employed marriage diplomacy to actualize the kinship metaphor and provide ideological justification for even larger material exchanges (e.g., horses, gold) through bride-prices and dowries. For each empire, acquisition of key resources like Lebanese cedar or Ferghana horses was never portrayed as barter trade or purchase exchange, but could only be characterized as reciprocal gifts or tribute. The representation of such exchanges also depended on the audience, for marriages and other interstate relations were often presented as equal and reciprocal arrangements to the other power, while being presented as asymmetrical tributary relations to the domestic elite audience.

Such remarkable parallels between the two empires can only be attributed to a functional necessity: given similar stages of social and economic development, early proto-empires necessarily evolve these mechanisms. Differences, such as the fact that Egypt only wanted to receive princesses, while China only wanted to send princesses during marriage diplomacy, can be attributed to cultural differences in marriage and kinship patterns.

Akhenaten, Wang Mang, and the Limits of Reform

A century or two into the life of many once-vibrant empires, a kind of ossification inexorably takes hold. Territorial expansion grinds to a halt as the limits of communication, transport, and military logistics lead to setbacks in battle, garrisoned borders, or retrenchment. This in turn results in a reduction of the spoils and tribute that once greased the wheels of imperial urban consumption and ensured elite adherence to the dynasty. Furthermore, interest groups that feed off the imperial surplus become deeply entrenched, guarding their wealth and privileges. Groups such as enfeoffed nobles, consort families, imperial favorites, and temple personnel syphon off power and resources from the center, constraining the actions of the ruler. Often these groups vie with one another to ensure the succession of a young, pliable monarch. Literary sources from these periods often express a palpable sense of decay, a deviation from a lost golden age.

To look at specific cases of this problem of decaying splendor, let us turn to late Eighteenth Dynasty New Kingdom Egypt (ca. 1349 BCE) and late Western Han China (ca. 8 BCE). The Eighteenth Dynasty was Egypt's second real foray into imperial expansion and by far its greatest. After expelling the Hyksos from the Delta and consolidating rule of the Nile valley, warrior pharaohs like Thutmose III (r. ca. 1479–1425 BCE) personally campaigned deep into Nubia in the south and Syria-Palestine in the north, greatly expanding the frontiers of Egypt and amassing an enormous amount of spoils and tribute. But during the next century and a half, there were unmistakable signs of emerging stasis and then decay. Under Amenhotep II (r. ca. 1425–1399 BCE), as imperial expansion ground to a halt, factional conflict arose at court. The nature of the succession

of the following two kings points unmistakably to trouble. Thutmose IV (r. ca. 1399–1389 BCE) was probably not the chosen crown prince and had to resort to supernatural sanction from the sphinx to justify his accession.¹ Amenhotep III (r. ca. 1389–1349 BCE) was probably only a small child upon taking the throne and possibly controlled by a regent and the powerful clan of Yuya the Tyuyu, who provided him with their daughter Tiye as consort.² His long reign was largely peaceful, and his foreign policy was one of gifts and diplomacy in the Levant and permanent garrisons in the south, both of which were very expensive to maintain (see [chapter 2](#)). Though his reign was full of splendor and monumental construction, it was like the warmth of the sun in the late afternoon, a delayed surge of heat well after the zenith. Powerful officials like Amenhotep son of Hapu (d. ca. 1356 BCE) controlled the resources of the realm, and other courtiers usurped the privileges of the king, even being granted burial in the Valley of the Kings. Another entrenched interest group that constrained the ruler was the wealthy temple of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, at Karnak. The Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs had maintained a mutually beneficial relationship with the Amun priesthood, lavishing their temple with spoils from their campaigns and new monumental constructions in exchange for divine legitimation, but as the temple's coffers swelled, so apparently did its power and ambition.³

In East Asia, late Western Han China displayed a veneer of stability. The ambitious Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 BCE) had campaigned to the four quadrants, greatly expanding the empire and opening up routes to the wealth of Central Asia (see [chapter 2](#)). The following reigns witnessed much peace and prosperity. With the surrender of the Southern Xiongnu to become a tributary power in 51 BCE, the dynasty no longer endured any serious external threat. And while territorial expansion had ceased, the population continued to grow, and government coinage flowed freely into an increasingly monetized economy. Under the surface, however, stasis and corruption had seriously invaded the system. Enfeoffed imperial relatives and a tax-exempt aristocracy hampered imperial finances, and official corruption ran rampant. The number of free-holding peasants declined drastically as large-scale landholders gobbled up their farms, then sought to remove these estates from the tax rolls. Furthermore, the ruler's actions were greatly limited by powerful consort families that kept him largely as a figurehead while they controlled the affairs of state for generations. There was a sense that the imperial line had lost its Heavenly mandate, for three rulers in succession had failed to produce a male heir. Among Han scholars, many felt that the Legalist-inspired state had strayed far from the ideals of classical antiquity.⁴

Enter the radical reformers. Though often portrayed by later dynastic chroniclers as heretics or usurpers, they were responding to the same call from a system in crisis. Through their attempts to address sequestered wealth, internal corruption, military decay, ideological malaise, and inefficient administration, they attempted to reestablish the empire on a more sustainable foundation. If they were even partially successful, they were labeled as sages or lawgivers, whereas, if they failed, they were condemned and erased from history. But was it really possible to reform these creaking behemoths successfully? What were the limits of reform?

To understand this problem better requires careful comparative study. If one

were to study just a single case of a mature empire's last-ditch attempt at major reform, it would be exceedingly difficult to isolate the anomalous or particular elements of that case from features shared by all such attempts at imperial restructuring. Our perspective could be blinded by the glare of charismatic individuals (and their ideologies) or obscured by chance occurrences like natural disasters or individual deaths.

The Comparison

Two radical reformers suitable for comparison are Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten; r. ca. 1349–1332 BCE) of Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, who promoted worship of a sole god and created a new imperial capital on virgin soil, and Wang Mang (45 BCE–23 CE), a close imperial relative who overthrew the long-lived Han dynasty of China to establish his short-lived Xin dynasty (9–23 CE).

To return to the metaphor of comparing apples to oranges, what sort of apple was Akhenaten and what sort of orange was Wang Mang, and are they comparable at all? They have never been spoken of in the same breath. More ink has probably been spilled over Akhenaten in the last 150 years than over any other figure of the pre-Classical world. Called by Egyptologist James Henry Breasted “the first individual in human history,” he has been compared to Moses, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, and Oliver Cromwell.⁵ He has been adopted as an icon by fascists, gay-rights activists, Afrocentrists, mystics, and the far fringe of pseudo-scholarship.⁶ Wang Mang has often been viewed in Chinese historiography as either an ambitious usurper or a failed politician, and is sometimes compared to the Song dynasty reformer Wang Anshi (1021–1086 CE), though in his own day he invited comparisons to the Confucian sage the Duke of Zhou (fl. ca. 1045–1020 BCE), who ruled as regent for his nephew King Cheng early in the Western Zhou period. Mostly, though, scholars rarely talk about Wang Mang at all anymore. There was only a brief flurry of interest in the first half of the twentieth century, when his economic policies prompted the reform-minded scholar Hu Shih (1891–1962) to call him “one of the greatest statesmen China has ever produced” and the “first socialist.”⁷

While Akhenaten has often been compared to prophets and visionaries, and Wang Mang to usurpers and political revolutionaries, both men actually had far more in common with each other. They both sought to make radical changes to the political, religious, and economic structure of mature dynasties that were beset with entrenched interest groups. Both were imperial family members whose rise was facilitated by a powerful elder female. Both attempted a reform agenda based on a fervent fundamentalist belief and signaled those changes to the population by desacralizing the old order and communicating visual signifiers of a new order. And both were undone by overreach in their reform, jealous reactionary interests, and unavoidable natural disasters. In the end, both men were vilified after their death and effectively erased from the record of legitimate succession.

The Sources

The available sources for comparing Akhenaten and Wang Mang are radically

different and biased by several factors. For the study of Akhenaten, there are numerous inscriptions left by him or his courtiers proclaiming his ideology and his vision for his capital city.⁸ For example, several versions of the lyrical “Great Hymn to Aten” are preserved, which is an invaluable source for understanding the Atenist religion and Akhenaten’s role as sole intermediary.⁹ We also have numerous boundary-stele inscriptions encircling his capital of Akhetaten, which describe the selection of the site and the building program.¹⁰ Also preserved are dozens of visual depictions of him, his wife, and his daughters, although rendered in an intentionally distorted style that probably bears only slight resemblance to reality.¹¹ Most importantly, the capital city of Akhetaten, the tombs of his family and courtiers, and his temples in Thebes and elsewhere have undergone more than a century of archaeological excavation and research. What we lack, however, is basic historical information, such as a detailed chronology or narrative of his reign or those of his immediate successors. We also lack standard biographical information, such as definitive proof that Akhenaten held a coregency with his father, if he had any biological sons, his actual cause of death, or even some hint toward what people thought of him and his reforms during his reign. In a sense, Akhenaten’s reign is relatively rich in primary sources, but lacks a near-contemporary historical narrative (even a biased one), which has allowed Egyptologists and amateurs to construct wildly varying accounts of his reign.

For the study of Wang Mang, we have no images, coins, or statues of the man himself, since early China prioritized the written word over the graven or painted image as a way to represent the ruler. All we have to visualize the man’s appearance are two written physical descriptions, which are unreliable since the physiognomy was likely manipulated to suit his historical character.¹² Archaeology provides us with the excavation of his ancestral-temple complex, which has yielded fascinating architectural details, but only limited images or inscriptions. Some upper-class painted tombs can be dated to his reign, and these may show some influence of his ideological program, but we have no tomb for Wang Mang himself, since he was afforded no burial by the rebels who murdered him.

The best source we do have for his reign is an astoundingly detailed historical account, written only a few decades after his death. The “Biography of Wang Mang” in *History of the Han*, authored by Ban Gu, is the longest section in that entire work, comprising nearly fifty thousand characters. It provides a detailed account of Wang Mang’s genealogy, his improbable rise to power, his attempted reforms, and his bloody downfall, complete with dozens of embedded proclamations from his own brush, propaganda from his allies, and accusations from his rivals. This is supplemented by a detailed account of his economic policies in the “Treatise on Food and Money” (Shihuo zhi) chapter in the same book, and other complementary accounts in the biographies of his courtiers. But no historical account is objective or unbiased, and Ban Gu’s history of Wang Mang is certainly challenged in this regard. Ban Gu wrote his history under the sponsorship of an emperor of the dynasty that overthrew Wang Mang, and the Ban family also had personal axes to grind with Wang Mang for slights against their clan in court politics. Thus, the entire account seeks to delegitimize Wang Mang at every turn and demean his motives and character. But the bias of the text is not impenetrable, because traditional

Chinese historiography operates through a cut-and-paste method, featuring original documents with added editorial comments. By removing the layers of commentary and criticism, it is possible to compensate for some of this bias and almost reach the level of contemporary source documents.

Desacralizing the Old Order

In order to make fundamental reforms and establish a new order, the old order must be cleared away. Both Akhenaten and Wang Mang attempted to distance themselves from the *ancien régime* through deliberate dislodging, defacing, and, finally, outright desecration.

Akhenaten (originally Amenhotep IV) probably did not have free rein at first to distance himself from the old order, because he might have served a certain number of years as coregent with his father, Amenhotep III.¹³ Even while the ceremonial capital was still in Thebes (the administrative capital was usually Memphis), Akhenaten built several new temples to the sun-disc, Aten, connected to the great temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, but he did not deface or demolish the Amun temples at this time. By regnal year five, however, he felt liberated enough to change his *nomen* from Amenhotep Netjer-Heqa-Waset (Amun Is Satisfied, God Ruler in Thebes) to Akhenaten (Efficacious for Aten).¹⁴ That same year he also took a momentous step when he decided to establish his capital in a barren desert bay on the east bank of the Nile, four hundred kilometers to the north in middle Egypt (the site of Tell el-Amarna; [map 1.1](#)). The new site might have been chosen because of an auspicious configuration of the eastern hills, which resembled the hieroglyph for the sunrise on the horizon, *akhet* (*ꜥḫ.t*). Thus, the city was named Akhetaten, “Horizon of the Sun-Disc.” By removing his divine self from the ceremonial capital at Thebes, he greatly diminished its sacred aura, and by literally distancing himself from the priestly factions and entrenched interests there, he generated the political and financial space needed to commence his reforms. Nicholas Reeves draws an analogy to the moving of the Japanese capital by Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806 CE) from Nara to Nagaoka (784 CE) and then to Heian-kyō (794 CE), which was done to distance the emperor and the court from the powerful Buddhist monasteries of Nara and the entrenched Fujiwara aristocrats. Thus, he argues that Akhenaten’s move could have been encouraged more by “court intrigue and politics” than by religious reform.¹⁵

According to the retrospective “Restoration Stele” erected by Tutankhamen after his return to Thebes, the temples of Egypt fell into ruin during Akhenaten’s reign out of neglect and lack of patronage, but it does not appear they were torn down.¹⁶ Toward the second half of his reign, however, it appears that Akhenaten became frustrated with the persistence of the Amun cult and the magical power of his name, which was inscribed everywhere in Egypt. Sometime between regnal years ten and twelve, he initiated what one scholar has called “the terror,” in which the name and image of Amun was hacked out of every inscription on which it could be found, even those ten meters above the ground on obelisks, on the walls of tombs, or on the small personal items of regular people.¹⁷ This was an iconoclastic campaign on the magnitude of the “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign of the Chinese Cultural

Revolution and would have required an army of men to cover such vast territory. In his stele, Tutankhamen also mentions that he fashioned new divine images of the gods out of precious metals, suggesting that the old statues and barques of the gods might have been desecrated or melted down and stripped for materials during Akhenaten's reign.¹⁸

In the case of Wang Mang, he initially drew his legitimation from his familial association with the Han imperial house, for his aunt was an empress, and he was first cousin to the former Emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 BCE). Thus, he could not immediately distance himself from the Han. In fact, his mandate to rule was mystically written by the spirit of the founding Han emperor himself and placed in a bronze coffer delivered to his ancestral temple.¹⁹ When he first ascended the throne in 9 CE, Wang Mang decreed that the funerary complexes of the Han emperors would remain sacrosanct, but over time his new dynasty struggled and he broke that promise, believing that the powerful spirits of past sovereigns were directly impeding his regime.²⁰ It was less than two years later, in December 10 CE, as pretenders kept cropping up claiming to be Han princes or Han generals, that he approved a memorial to abolish services at ancestral temples dedicated to the Han emperors in the capital, except for the one dedicated to the founder.²¹

Then, in 21 CE, in a bold act of ritual desecration, Wang Mang ordered workmen to chisel out the unification edict of the First Emperor of Qin that was inscribed on the chests of the colossal bronze statues that remained in the palace from Qin times and served as gate guardians.²² These texts had taunted him in his dreams and represented the legitimacy of the imperial state founded by the Qin and inherited by the Han on decidedly Legalist and un-Confucian principles. After the accomplishments of the First Emperor of Qin had been erased through this act, Wang Mang ritually attacked the founder of the Han dynasty. He had soldiers rudely bivouac inside the ancestral temple of Emperor Gaozu (r. 202–195 BCE) in the capital and “draw their swords and strike in all directions, destroy its doors and windows with axes, whip the walls of the building with ochre-red whips, and sprinkle them with peach water.”²³ The use of weapons and exorcistic devices such as peach water demonstrates that Wang Mang was trying to ritually exorcise or kill the powerful spirit of the Han founder. It should be noted that just as with Akhenaten, the greatest desecration of the old order occurred when the new dynasty was in great difficulty and on the verge of collapse, for both rulers probably viewed the residual sacredness of the old symbols as the real cause of the failure of their reforms.

Communicating the New Order

The political, religious, artistic, and economic changes wrought by Akhenaten and Wang Mang probably should not be seen as the dramatic ruptures they are often portrayed as. Both men were hardly outsiders, being recognized members of the royal family, and each were in some way continuing trends seen in the previous sovereigns' reigns. Wang Mang's classicizing Confucian ideology bolstered those movements already seen during the reign of his cousin, Emperor Cheng, and Akhenaten's zealous worship of the manifestation of the

solar god in his physical form of the sun-disc (Aten) had already been anticipated during the long reign of his father.²⁴

Nevertheless, the reforms they instituted were significant and jarring, shaking the empires' foundations. It is interesting to note, however, that each man portrayed his reforms as a fundamentalist return to "first principles." Akhenaten tried to return to the golden age of the Old Kingdom, when the pharaoh was viewed as an infallible god on earth.²⁵ The New Kingdom had witnessed the beginnings of an erosion of the pharaoh's divine nature, and his power and wealth had to be shared with various institutions, including the Amun temple at Karnak.²⁶ Wang Mang, in his turn, tried to return to the golden age envisioned by the Confucians, the Western Zhou period, when the king was viewed as receiving a divine mandate as the Son of Heaven. He initially encouraged courtiers to view him as the second coming of the Duke of Zhou (Confucius's hero), but later Wang Mang assumed the Mandate of Heaven upon himself.

In comparing the attempted reforms of the two rulers, the mode of analysis employed by Charles Sanft in his study of the Qin dynasty is useful, as it identifies the creation of a body of common knowledge among the people as the key factor in eliciting cooperation and compliance with a new regime.²⁷ How could the people support the new regime if they did not even know it existed? Such common knowledge was communicated through oral, textual, visual, and material markers that intersected with the vision and hearing of the people, through such things as coinage, standard weights and measures, public proclamations, royal tours, monumental statues, and roads. The purpose of reform was not just for the benefits of change itself, but to communicate that someone new (and awesome) was in charge, and it would be best to cooperate with his new regime. Let us now survey some of the markers that communicated knowledge of the two reform programs.

NAMING AND LANGUAGE CHANGES

During the Xin dynasty, change was the order of the day. Wang Mang was a relentless tinkerer who changed nearly every aspect of imperial rule, at least in name and appearance. He repeatedly changed the names of the geographic divisions in the empire and instituted changes to official titles, harking back to titles found in Confucian texts.

Obviously, the dynastic name was changed first, from Han to Xin,²⁸ but he also changed the name of the imperial capital from Chang'an (長安; Long-Lasting Peace) to the near-homophonous Chang'an (常安; Perpetual Peace).²⁹ The name of nearly every other commandery and county in the empire followed suit, certainly communicating to the people that someone new was in charge, because place names impact people's daily environment in concrete ways. But Wang Mang took his naming changes too far, for he changed the names of some places so many times that people became confused, undermining the goal of common-knowledge creation.³⁰ He also changed the calendar, moving the official first month of the year back one lunar month, and moved the beginning of each day (i.e., midnight) forward two hours. Both changes would have impacted the lives of some groups, such as scribes and merchants, who needed to keep track of the official date and time.³¹ Recent

archaeology has revealed that Wang Mang issued new standard weights and measures, a signaling device also employed by the First Emperor of Qin.³² Finally, he announced a plan to relocate the primary capital back to the old Zhou royal capital of Luoyang (map 1.2). Plans were drawn up, but this move never materialized, probably due to extreme cost and intense resistance from the landed aristocracy who mostly resided near Chang'an.³³

In Egypt, Akhenaten also advertised his new regime through dramatic changes in naming and language. The most dramatic was the change in his *nomen*, mentioned earlier. While he did not change his *praenomen* of Neferkheperure-Waenre (by which foreign monarchs referred to him in the Amarna Letters), he did change most of the other titles in his five-fold titulary.³⁴ New place-names were created by Akhenaten when he established his capital at the site of Akhetaten, and he christened new buildings there such as “Mansion of Aten” and “House of Aten.”

Another change instigated by Akhenaten that would have struck any literate observer as marking a new age was his revolutionary use of the current spoken register of the language in inscriptions that recorded his royal proclamations. The earlier pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty had exclusively used the classical Middle Egyptian language for proclamations. This was an old written register (in use from around 2000 BCE) far removed from the spoken language of the day. On his earliest preserved proclamation, one of the boundary stelae at his new capital, the preamble is written in classical Middle Egyptian, but when the king’s speech is quoted, it suddenly breaks into the contemporary vernacular language, referred to by linguists as Late Egyptian.³⁵ Any literate observer, or someone who heard the proclamation recited, would have been instantly struck by the immediacy and relatability of the vernacular speech. This was not the canned rhetoric of long-dead kings, this was happening *right now*.

ECONOMIC CHANGES

Wang Mang’s economic reforms have been studied in great detail by earlier scholars.³⁶ While the openly acknowledged purpose of the reforms was to mollify Wang Mang’s zealous base of radical Confucians by enacting the idealized policies of the Western Zhou (as seen in “rediscovered” texts like the *Rituals of the Zhou* [Zhouli]), his real motivation was to extract the maximum amount of revenue from all classes of society to fund his building projects, foreign wars, and colonization schemes. Overall, his economic reforms can be categorized as either concerned with revenue generation or with wealth redistribution.

To generate revenue, Wang Mang in 10 CE extended traditional government monopolies on salt, iron, and coin-casting to also include liquor, forestry, fishing, and hunting.³⁷ He prohibited lesser nobles and merchants from possessing gold and made them submit it to him in exchange for nearly worthless coins, capturing a huge windfall.³⁸ All these changes were probably quite impactful upon those directly affected, but not as visible as his changes to the general coinage. While still regent in 7 CE, he issued new archaizing coins, some shaped like ring-pommeled knives, with inscribed values far in excess of their actual weight in bronze (fig. 3.1).³⁹ In 9 CE, he demonetized the knife-

shaped coins (because of their symbolic association with the Han) and added a dizzying array of new currencies, including some made of gold, silver, cowrie shell, and tortoise shell.⁴⁰ More changes followed in 14 CE, leading to mass counterfeiting, widespread punishments, and economic chaos.⁴¹

There was nothing so ubiquitous in late Han China as bronze coinage. The government had cast twenty-eight billion coins in the previous century. It was everywhere, and everybody needed access to some of it, at least for certain taxes. There was no better way to communicate Wang Mang's economic reforms and their archaizing rhetoric than through the medium of archaic-looking coins, shaped like knives or shovels, mimicking the forms of late-Zhou coinage. They would be visible to everyone. Unfortunately, the reality behind the rhetoric was a serious debasement of the metal content of the coins in relation to their inscribed value. Debasing coinage was the standard toolkit for ambitious rulers whose visions were greater than their revenue, and it never fooled the average person, even when cloaked as pretty, gilded, archaic knives.

Wang Mang's attempted redistribution of wealth, abolition of the slave trade, and price controls contributed to his being labeled as the "first socialist" by some modern scholars. In his first year as emperor, Wang Mang nationalized all land and declared land sales illegal. He also required families with more than forty-three acres of land to redistribute the excess to their poorer relatives and neighbors. At the same time, he banned the sale of slaves.⁴² He instituted price controls in the major markets, ordering government officials to buy commodities when the prices dropped and sell them at a fixed price when prices rose.⁴³ This gave ample opportunities for corrupt officials to enrich themselves.⁴⁴ As far as communicating these reforms to the masses, the resulting chaotic prices would surely have not escaped notice, and the lack of a slave trade in marketplaces would have been quite conspicuous.



Figure 3.1. Coin with cast and inlaid inscriptions ("one knife[-shaped coin] with a fair [market value] of 5,000 [cash]"), Western Han period, Wang Mang regency, ca. 7 CE. Bronze, with gold inlay, L 7.34 cm. Shanghai Museum, China. Photo courtesy of Shanghai Museum.

The New Kingdom Egyptian economy was not as monetized or as market-driven as the Western Han economy, so there are no "economic reforms" that Akhenaten could have executed on the magnitude of Wang Mang's.⁴⁵ However, the temples in Egypt were one of the largest sectors of the economy, so when Akhenaten stopped patronizing the temples, or shuttered them entirely, he freed up large amounts of sequestered wealth, and most of that wealth probably went directly to the court for use in furnishing his new capital.⁴⁶ This change would have been communicated quite readily to the people of Thebes or Memphis, who would easily have noticed the halt in temple construction,

and that the opulent festivals that punctuated their year were greatly diminished.⁴⁷

ART AND ARCHITECTURAL CHANGES

Fostering new styles in art and architecture was another way that the two reformers signaled their changes to elites, and to a certain extent, to the population in general. Wang Mang advertised his lineage with his construction of his Nine Ancestral Temples just outside the main capital gate (discussed later), but his new dynasty was also announced in more subtle ways, through the auspicious images and inscriptions on *wadang*, the circular tile ends that terminated roof eaves (fig. 3.5). One excavated example from a government office in Wang Mang's newly created colonial province of Xihai Commandery reads, "Xihai is settled and at peace."⁴⁸ These pervasive little slogans would permeate the visual world of people in a subliminal way, like the ubiquitous "big-character posters" of the PRC period in China. In tomb architecture, Wang Mang's ideological program, with its cult of Heaven, may have fostered the new four-sided domed tomb vault, which better represented Heaven and the realm of the afterlife.⁴⁹ It is also worth noting that the earliest painted depictions of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu) appear in tombs dated to the Xin dynasty.⁵⁰ This popular deity, whose cult had reached a feverish millenarian pitch during the rise of Wang Mang at court (see chapter 7), could have been used by Wang Mang as a convenient symbol for the sovereignty of another powerful female at court, his aunt Wang Zhengjun (71 BCE–13 CE), grand empress dowager, who was nominally in charge during the regency and who legitimated the handover of power to Wang Mang.⁵¹ According to one ancient commentator, Wang Mang's long-lived aunt may have become associated with the immortal Queen Mother of the West because of her great longevity.⁵²

In Egypt, Akhenaten's radical new style and subject matter in art, referred to by art historians as Amarna art, was one of the principal ways that he communicated his new order.⁵³ While his artists did not change the basic principles underlying Egyptian representation, they did alter the subject matter of royally patronized art and the canonical proportions of the royal image.⁵⁴ Absent were the numerous scenes of the gods, their mythology, and their cultic rituals. The most repeated scene in tombs, temples, and stelae now was that of the royal family (Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters) worshipping the many-armed sun-disc (plate 4). First in Thebes, and then in his new capital, Akhenaten erected statues of himself and Nefertiti in a distorted style that emphasized their divine nature (fig. 3.2). One could not possibly miss them. In architecture, he promoted a style of temple that featured courtyards and altars open to the rays of the sun. Although such spaces dedicated to various sun cults had existed since the Old Kingdom and perhaps provided models for Akhenaten's architectural program, the structure of his temples was very different from the dark inner sanctums of most traditional Egyptian temples. Finally, an apparently new architectural form in the palace, which Akhenaten called the "Window of Appearance," consisted of a raised platform with decorated frame that sat above an audience hall and allowed Akhenaten and Nefertiti to lean over the cushioned railing and appear before their adoring

courtiers, whom they showered with gifts (fig. 3.3).⁵⁵ Such a structure could have acted as a focal point during festivals and other holidays, replacing the shrouded cult image of a temple god that was carried in procession at those events.



Figure 3.2. Fragment of colossal statue pillar of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1345–1338 BCE. Sandstone, H 1.37 m, L 0.88 m, east Karnak Temple, Luxor, Egypt. Musée du Louvre, E27112, photo by Christian Decamps, © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

ACCELERATING CHANGE

To be communicated effectively, changes needed to be swiftly and comprehensively implemented. Both Wang Mang and Akhenaten wanted to realize their visions quickly, so each had to cut corners or utilize techniques of efficient construction and production. For Wang Mang, the naming and calendrical changes were easily implemented through the bureaucratic system, as excavated documents and inscriptions show that they were disseminated across the empire with great rapidity. Changing the coin molds at the central mint for his new coinage was also not difficult, but getting people to recognize and use his debased coinage was exceedingly so. And to accelerate the construction of his massive Nine Ancestral Temples, he cannibalized timber and roof tiles from nearby Han palaces. He also took advantage of the mass production facilities at imperial factories to churn out thousands of gifts for officials (with his new dynastic name on them) to announce his new dynasty.⁵⁶

Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten was also impatient to proclaim his new reign and build his temples and new capital city as quickly as possible. In the first five years of his reign, he built several temples to Aten at Karnak, four of which have been identified in inscriptions. To construct these in short order, his architects employed tens of thousands of modular sandstone blocks (referred to by antiquarians and archaeologists as *talatat*), most with standardized dimensions: twenty-six centimeters high, fifty-three centimeters wide, and twenty-four centimeters thick (plate 5). Unlike the monumental masonry normally used to construct the walls of Egyptian temples, these sandstone or limestone *talatat* could be carried and set by a single worker.⁵⁷ In addition, the time-consuming task of decorating temple stonework was streamlined with the *talatat*, replacing the laborious raised relief of earlier temples with a less time-consuming sunken relief that was later brightly painted. Construction with *talatat* was also employed in some buildings at the new capital of Akhetaten, which often had a mud-brick or rubble core that was only faced with stone, a further indication of the rushed building program.⁵⁸

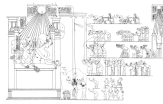


Figure 3.3. Ay and his wife receiving gifts at the Window of Appearance, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1341–1338 BCE. Carved limestone, east side of north wall of Tomb of Ay, Tell el-Amarna site, Egypt, from Davies, *Rock Tombs*, vol. 6, plate XXIX.

Sanctifying the New Order

For the reformers, communicating their changes helped generate common knowledge and hopefully some cooperation, but this communication must be framed in a language that makes the changes seem divinely conceived, or at least divinely sanctioned or classically inspired. In his classic study, “The Sacred in Human Evolution,” Roy Rappaport argues that in an age before totalitarian coercion was possible, early leaders had to rely heavily on unfalsifiable “sacred propositions” that associated their selves and their arbitrary social and political measures with divine forces. They employed “numinous” experiences felt during rituals to reinforce the truthfulness of those propositions among the people, thereby eliciting cooperation. Both Wang Mang and Akhenaten heavily relied on this method of legitimation.

To justify his economic changes, Wang Mang portrayed them not as new measures of his own design but as a return to the precedents of classical (Western Zhou) antiquity, as seen in supposedly ancient texts like the *Book of Documents* (Shangshu) or *Rituals of the Zhou*. Ban Gu writes of him, “Every time there was something that he initiated or invented, he always wanted it to be in accordance with ancient [practices and tried to] secure the words of [some] Classic [as a model].”⁵⁹ *Rituals of the Zhou* was the perfect text for Wang Mang to use as a model for his reforms, since it portrayed a well-ordered, centralized state during the Western Zhou, where all power flowed from the organizing functions of the ruler.⁶⁰ The program of the text fit so well with Wang Mang’s reforms, however, that some scholars during the nineteenth century believed it was a forgery written by Liu Xin, one of Wang Mang’s courtiers.⁶¹ To cite just one example, his price controls were based on his (and Liu Xin’s) interpretation of passages in *Rituals of the Zhou*.⁶² Thus, Wang Mang’s economic reforms, as well as his political and ritual reforms, were given sanction by associating them with the great semidivine sage of the Confucians, the Duke of Zhou, whose role as a wise and selfless regent Wang Mang also mimicked shamelessly.



Figure 3.4. Tripod vessels, Xin dynasty, 9–23 CE. Bronze (rear) and ceramic (front), H 45 cm (largest), from the site of Zhangjiapu, Shaanxi, China. Photo courtesy of Cultural Relics Publishing House.

A material example that demonstrates how Wang Mang modeled his ritual system on the Western Zhou can be seen in the archaizing ritual vessels

discovered in the sizeable tomb at Zhangjiapu (fig. 3.4).⁶³ One of the side chambers contained five bronze tripods and four ceramic ones, clearly meant to constitute one or two ritual sets. Sets of ritual tripods, whose number indexed the rank of the owner, were a major feature of the Zhou ancestral cult and burial ritual but are hardly ever seen in Han-period tombs. Lothar von Falkenhausen has observed that the decoration on these tripods is a reasonably close imitation of that found on genuine Western Zhou tripods from the mid-ninth century BCE, indicating that Wang Mang was trying to “invest current ritual practices with a Zhou aura.”⁶⁴

A more fundamental aspect of legitimation for Wang Mang was justifying his very right to rule. From when he first assumed the title of general-in-chief (Dasima) in 8 BCE, and through his years as Duke Giving Tranquility to the Han Dynasty (An Han Gong), Occupying the Regency (Jushe), and temporary emperor (Jia Huangdi), Wang Mang drew his legitimation from his association with the Han imperial line. His aunt Wang Zhengjun had been the empress of Emperor Yuan (r. 48–33 BCE), so he was a first cousin to Emperor Cheng and had previously married his daughter to Emperor Ping (r. 1–5 CE). Even the mystical metal-bound coffer that gave him the Mandate of Heaven was supposedly written by the spirit of the Han founder.

Once he ascended the imperial throne in January of 9 CE, however, Wang Mang sought to legitimate himself and his lineage without reference to the Han. This involved the construction of an elaborate genealogy that made him descended from the sage rulers of antiquity like the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) and Emperor Shun (Shundi) and included lineages of four different surnames other than Wang.⁶⁵ To communicate and sanctify this imperial legitimacy in a monumental, visual fashion, he constructed an enormous complex of ancestral temples just south of the capital, referred to by historians as the Nine Ancestral Temples of Wang Mang (Wang Mang Jiumiao). He had announced his intention to build nine ancestral temples in 9 CE upon his accession, but had delayed the start of construction.⁶⁶ He had been conducting his ancestral sacrifices in a more modest building, but the worsening economy convinced him that he needed to reinforce his legitimation with a grand statement.

During the seventh lunar month of 20 CE, he divined by cracking turtle shells that the most auspicious location for the new buildings would be on prime land just south of the Chang'an city walls, and the next month he personally inaugurated the foundation work with three ceremonial tappings. He accelerated this construction by cannibalizing timbers and roof tiles from other Han palaces.⁶⁷ The new temples were immense and designed to inspire awe. Their elaborate decoration of bronze brackets and carved and gilded designs would communicate the message that Wang Mang had a glorious lineage and was now in total control. The largest shrine was said to be forty *zhang* (approx. 92.16 meters) in length and breadth, and nearly seventeen *zhang* high at the roof ridge (approx. 39.2 meters). The dimensions of the foundation, at least, have been confirmed by modern archaeology. The work was completed in about eighteen months at enormous expense, for Ban Gu reports that it cost billions of coins for materials and labor, along with the lives of tens of thousands of conscripted laborers.⁶⁸

Very little survives of these enormous constructions, which were destroyed by rebels shortly after they were completed. Based on the excavated

foundations, archaeologists have reconstructed palatial multileveled structures with a common layout of ritual spaces.⁶⁹ The eaves of the gates on each side of the enclosure wall around each temple were decorated with elaborate molded ceramic tile-ends, displaying the corresponding spirit for each of the four directions of the Chinese cosmos (fig. 3.5).⁷⁰ These served to convey that the building was a cosmogram, properly oriented to the universe, with the ancestors of Wang Mang as the pivot in the center.

Just as Wang Mang borrowed sacred approval for his ascension to the throne, Akhenaten portrayed his dramatic move to his new capital of Akhetaten not as an arbitrary decision of himself or his officials, but something chosen by the god Aten himself. This is recorded in a remarkable series of boundary stelae that Akhenaten erected to demarcate his capital area (fig. 3.6).⁷¹ One of the earliest stela states:

Now it is Aten, my father, who advised me concerning it, [namely] Akhetaten. No official had ever advised me concerning it, nor had any people in the entire land ever advised me concerning it, to tell me [a plan] for making Akhetaten in this distant place. It was Aten, my father, [who advised me] concerning it, so that it could be made for him as Akhetaten.⁷²



Figure 3.5. Green Dragon of the East, Xin dynasty, ca. 20 CE. Molded ceramic rooftile endcap, from Wang Mang's Nine Ancestral Temples, Chang'an (modern Xi'an), China. Photo courtesy of Shaanxi History Museum.



Figure 3.6. Amarna Boundary Stele S, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1345 BCE. Limestone, H 254 cm, W 152 cm, site of Tell el-Amarna, Egypt. From Davies, *Rock Tombs*, vol. 5, plate XXXIX.

There were originally at least sixteen boundary stelae, of which fourteen survive in some form.⁷³ Some were provided with brightly painted relief sculptures of the royal family and were accessible via a straight path to allow visitors. They mark out the maximum extent that the royal capital could take and appear to emulate the boundary stakes of a normal land deed. In this case, however, the god is staking his claim to “widowed” land, which Akhenaten is quick to claim “did not belong to a god, nor to a goddess; it did not belong to a male ruler, nor to a female ruler; it did not belong to any people to do their

business with it.”⁷⁴ It has been suggested that the boundary stela also represent the capital as a holy diagram, with rays of power emanating from the royal tomb in the east and passing through the major temples.⁷⁵ Thus, Akhenaten’s capital was not the expensive pet project of a willful autocrat. It was divinely directed, divinely selected, and divinely protected.

Not only were Akhenaten’s major reforms, such as the new capital, embedded in a sacred discourse, but his very image and that of his family were also given a divine appearance through the new style of art. The physical appearance of Akhenaten, especially in the stone colossi discovered at Karnak in 1925 in the ruins of one of his temples (fig. 3.2), have fascinated scholars for a century. His torso is often shown with a significant paunch and prominent breasts and buttocks, supported by spindly legs, while his narrowed head displays a pendant jaw, thick lips, and slanted eyes, perched on an extended neck. While scholars used to think these features accurately represented a man with some sort of congenital or endocrinal malady, recent work has argued that the representation of the pharaoh was related to his religious reforms.⁷⁶ The distorted proportions and androgynous features of his images helped to convey a supernatural aura, for certainly no mortal could look like this.⁷⁷ As noted earlier, the images also helped to communicate and create common knowledge about Akhenaten’s reforms.

The religious texts that survive from his reign, most notably the “Great Hymn to Aten,” shed further light on how Akhenaten sought to sanctify his own person and legitimate his kingship and reforms. While grounded in an earlier tradition of solar hymns, the Great Hymn pushes the theology of Aten further.⁷⁸ In the Great Hymn, found most complete in the tomb of the courtier, Ay, Aten is described as “the sole God, beside whom there is none.”⁷⁹ He is a universal god over all people, both Egyptian and barbarian, and he sustains all life. The key line in the text appears toward the end, when Akhenaten states, “You (Aten) are in my heart; there is no other who knows you, *only your son*, Neferkheperure-Waenre (Akhenaten), whom you have taught your ways and your might.”⁸⁰ In images and texts, Aten is portrayed as a king in the sky, for his disc wears a *uraeus* and is given a set of double cartouches like a pharaoh. Since Akhenaten is his son on earth, he rightly possesses the kingship because of this relationship. In carved ritual scenes, even those in private tombs, only Akhenaten and his immediate family are shown worshipping Aten (plate 4). Therefore, not only was Akhenaten portrayed as the son of god, a sanctifying discourse seen in many early monarchies, but he was also the sole intermediary to the only divine power in the cosmos. Even the living physical bodies of the king and his family stood as intermediaries on their own, acting like cult statues and oracular conduits. Akhenaten was not only sacred, he was indispensable.

Collapse

It is clear that, despite these attempts at sanctification, the bewildering reforms of Wang Mang and Akhenaten were largely unsuccessful and unpopular, further eroded their economies, and irreparably damaged foreign relations. Each reign was also impacted by unforeseen and unavoidable natural disasters that

probably hastened their demise. Wang Mang and Akhenaten each passed from the scene after a similar number of years on the throne, one by violent rebellion and the other from unknown causes. Though Akhenaten's immediate successors dismantled his system in stages, Wang Mang's regime was swept away in a tsunami of violent warfare.

UNPOPULAR CHANGES

Wang Mang's naming changes confused people, and his attempted economic reforms antagonized nearly every social class, seriously eroding his once bountiful support. Some of his policies, such as the emulation of the ancient "well-field" system of land allotment, were so impractical they could never have been implemented. His ridiculous ban on people possessing copper and charcoal (to prevent counterfeiting) was rescinded after four years, but only after thousands had been punished for violations.⁸¹ Wang Mang also had to acknowledge that two policies in particular—his ban on the private sale of land and slaves, and his limit on the size of landholdings—were very unpopular with his nobles, so he rescinded those in 12 CE.⁸² The early twentieth-century scholar Hu Shih argued that Wang Mang's more socialist-style reforms failed not because they were unpopular, but because they were simply ahead of their time by nineteen centuries, since ancient China lacked the modern infrastructure and communication necessary to implement reforms like the price controls.⁸³ Toward the end of his reign, when the rebels were closing in, Wang Mang repealed every reform he had ever instated, but it was too late to quell the anger of the mob.⁸⁴

In Egypt, Akhenaten had changed two of the most fundamental aspects of life for his elites and other clients: their place of residence and their religion. He asked or required them to move to the middle of nowhere and to relinquish their beloved gods who gave meaning and structure to their lives. Akhenaten was to be their sole intermediary with the divine. All those living in his new city had to accept the institutional and procedural changes that came with such a physical move and ideological shift. And while courtiers and workers at the new capital may have paid lip service to the new cult, some even setting up shrines to the royal family in their houses, archaeology at Tell el-Amarna has shown that much of the old private domestic religion, with its various traditional deities, continued as before.⁸⁵

Based on the backlash we see unleashed after Akhenaten and his followers passed from the scene, these changes were very unpopular among several levels of society. According to current evidence, it appears that Akhenaten's shadowy successor, Smenkhkare (r. ca. 1332–1328 BCE), started to reinstate some of the old order, possibly even during a coregency while Akhenaten was still alive. By his third regnal year, Smenkhkare restored patronage at Thebes for the god Amun.⁸⁶ Smenkhkare's actions read as an acknowledgment that Akhenaten's reforms were unpopular with elites and his grand experiment had been deemed a failure.

THE ECONOMY

There is plentiful evidence that the economy was on the point of collapse by the end of Wang Mang's reign, even though we must rely on the biased brush

of Ban Gu for our information. Crop failures and the severe debasement of coinage led to runaway inflation. We are told that the price of grain east of Luoyang in 21 CE was two thousand coins per *shi* (twenty liters), which was an increase of 2,000 percent over the average price during most of the Han.⁸⁷ Wang Mang reduced the salaries of officials to compensate for lost revenue, but that only led them to squeeze the populace with all forms of illicit taxation, driving them off the land and into banditry.⁸⁸ Finally, Ban Gu reports that by the time Wang Mang was assassinated, the number of taxable registered households in the empire had been reduced by 50 percent.⁸⁹ Now, not all of those people had died of famine, though cannibalism was reported in some areas. It appears that many of those missing people had migrated from the devastation of North China toward South China, where the population would increase considerably by the time of the next preserved census.⁹⁰

It is more difficult to gauge the health of the Egyptian economy under Akhenaten, since it was not monetized, and we have no contemporary population statistics or prices like we have for Xin dynasty China. But it is likely that the loss of royal patronage and possible closure of the temples throughout the land directly affected many people, since temple festivals and markets probably were one of the most important integrating factors for regular people into the general economy. Akhenaten had promised in one of his boundary stelae, “to make all revenues that are in the entire land belong to Aten,” and he certainly directed the resources of the land toward building his new capital, which may have eventually housed twenty thousand people.⁹¹ Though confiscating the sequestered wealth of the great temples initially freed up that wealth, it was not really directed into the general economy. Thus, it had little or no sustained trickle-down effect. Some scholars have argued that Akhenaten’s indifference to regular statecraft, and his assumed absence from the administrative capital of Memphis, led him to delegate tasks such as taxation to favorites or other corrupt officials, who squeezed the people just like Wang Mang’s rapacious officials.⁹² This dire situation was compounded by a deteriorating situation among the Egyptian vassal states, which probably led to a decrease in trade and tribute.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Akhenaten and Wang Mang each enjoyed the pomp and symbolism of a presentation of exotic foreign tribute, but both rulers had neither the patience to engage in careful diplomacy nor the martial nature to take the offensive on the battlefield. While Wang Mang’s arrogance and insistence on outward appearances was his downfall in foreign policy, Akhenaten’s failure was due to sheer negligence. The two rulers bungled foreign policy so terribly that some of the resulting setbacks would take decades to reverse, if they could be remedied at all.

When Wang Mang assumed the regency, he inherited a fairly stable situation in terms of foreign relationships. The former belligerent enemy of the Southern Xiongnu had entered into a tributary relationship with the Han decades earlier and regularly came to court to show submission and receive gifts. Access to Central Asia was guaranteed by a network of vassal states in the Western Regions (see [chapter 2](#)) and secured by a powerful viceroy; similar

client-state relationships were maintained in the far southwest. But the ever-restless Wang Mang was unsatisfied with this reality and eagerly sought to imitate the tributary foreign relations reflected in his classical texts.

When strange beasts were sent in tribute from distant chiefdoms, this was viewed as an omen from Heaven that a sage ruler was on the throne, so Wang Mang arranged that such strange beasts were presented to his court, then feigned ignorance about the arrangements. For example, Confucian tradition maintained that during the golden age of the regency of the Duke of Zhou, a foreign people called the Yueshang presented a white pheasant to court. This omen was said to appear when “a true king is unsurpassed in his sacrifices and moderate in his repasts and robes.”⁹³ So, in 1 CE, during his regency over Emperor Ping, Wang Mang strongly hinted to the governor of Yi Province in the far southwest that the tribes beyond the border should send a similar bird in tribute. Accordingly, a few months later, a tribe identified as the Yueshang sent one albino pheasant and two black ones to court, which were later sacrificed in the ancestral temple. This incident was cited repeatedly in memorials over the next few years to build consensus at court that Wang Mang was the second coming of the Duke of Zhou and should maybe be emperor himself.⁹⁴ In an even stranger incident the following year, the land of Huangzhi (identified as Bengal in India) sent a rhinoceros as tribute. This was not a spontaneous tribute mission either. Wang Mang had earlier sent a request to Huangzhi that such a tribute be presented in order to bolster his reputation as a sage. It took a ten-month sea voyage for the live rhinoceros to arrive.⁹⁵

But real diplomacy could not be staged so easily, and Wang Mang's literary idealism only made the situation worse. When Huhanye, the *chanyu* of the Xiongnu, submitted to the Han in 51 BCE, he was granted an imperial seal by Emperor Xuan that was labeled a *xi*, the same word used to designate the Chinese emperor's seal. Wang Mang hated the connotation of this, which had no classical precedent, so he delivered a new seal to a subsequent *chanyu* in 9 CE, which only used the word *zhang*, a term used to designate the seal of bureaucratic officials.⁹⁶ Earlier in 2 CE, Wang Mang had bribed a *chanyu* who had the unwieldy name of Nangzhiyasi to only use one character for his given name, Zhi, to sound more like a good Chinese name.⁹⁷ According to Ban Gu, the Xiongnu leader took offense at these slights and began raiding the border again. Wang Mang declared war in 11 CE and levied an enormous army of three hundred thousand men for an invasion, despite the objections of his general that it was logistically impossible to support a force that large for the planned three-hundred-day assault. The men waited at the border for provisions for months. Short of supplies, they ravaged the countryside, driving out the Han farmers, and never carried out the invasion.⁹⁸ Inflaming matters further, Wang Mang then executed the hostage Xiongnu prince at the capital in 12 CE.⁹⁹ The military fiasco would be repeated in 19 CE and 21 CE, when Wang Mang tried twice more to levy armies to invade Xiongnu territory.¹⁰⁰

The situation in Central Asia, Manchuria, and the far southwest deteriorated almost as badly. Following a loss of trust and similar verbal slights to their prestige, rebels in the Central Asian vassal state of Yanqi (Karasaḥr; [map 1.2](#)) murdered the Chinese viceroy in 11 CE.¹⁰¹ According to Ban Gu, other client states followed suit, and Chinese “access to the Western Regions was henceforth cut off.”¹⁰² In 12 CE, barbarian client tribes in the far southern

Zangge Commandery (present-day Guizhou) murdered their Chinese governor,¹⁰³ and in 14 CE, rebels in the far southwest (present-day Yunnan) did the same and rose in revolt.¹⁰⁴ The northeastern buffer zone in Manchuria was in revolt by 12 CE.¹⁰⁵ So, having inherited fairly stable borders, Wang Mang was now fighting revolts and incursions on four fronts, due to his own arrogance and his obsession with classical appearances.

Akhenaten also inherited a complex multifront foreign policy, which took a great amount of energy and attention to maintain, as detailed in the previous chapter. It appears from contemporary written sources that after he moved his capital to Akhetaten, the pharaoh could no longer be bothered with foreign diplomacy or military engagements, being satisfied with the pageantry of tribute missions, and the Egyptian empire unraveled due to his negligence.

Just as with his counterpart in China, Akhenaten's role at the center of the civilized world was legitimated through a tributary system in which foreigners were expected to present exotic tribute to court in grand ceremonies. Just such a magnificent presentation of tribute occurred in Akhenaten's regnal year twelve, based on depictions in the tombs of two of his courtiers (fig. 2.3). Foreign ambassadors from peer kingdoms like the Hittites, vassal-state rulers from Syria-Palestine, and barbarian chiefs from Nubia, Libya, and Punt (Eritrea) are depicted presenting hostage-sons, gold, fabrics, aromatics, and exotic animals like lions and leopards, while Akhenaten and Nefertiti observe from a special kiosk and distribute gifts.¹⁰⁶ It is interesting to note that this apparent triumph of foreign relations occurred when contemporaneous documents tell us that the international situation was already seriously falling apart.

Akhenaten's policy in Nubia, which Egypt had conquered early in the Eighteenth Dynasty, remained fairly effective, as his viceroy maintained control through a series of garrisons and punitive countermeasures.¹⁰⁷ The situation in the Levant was much more complex and ever-changing. The international diplomatic correspondence in the Amarna Letters (see chapter 2) reveals a complex interaction between great foreign powers like the Mitanni, the Hittites, and Babylonia, along with a cluster of Egyptian vassal states throughout the Levant. Akhenaten's father had maintained a delicate balance in all these relationships using marriage alliances and gifts, but this required far more energy and dedication than Akhenaten was apparently willing to dedicate. It appears that early on in his sole reign, Akhenaten offended King Tushratta of the Mitanni by not sending a promised gift of gold statues, nor replying to letters, and detaining his envoys for more than four years.¹⁰⁸ Akhenaten then apparently initiated a separate peace with the Hittites, which allowed them free reign to crush the Mitanni, Egypt's former ally. When they heard no overtures of support from Egypt, most of the former client states of Mitanni also went over to the Hittites.¹⁰⁹ The Amarna Letters reveal repeated calls from Egypt's own client states in Lebanon for military aid ("Send archers!"), but these calls apparently fell on deaf ears, for most of Egypt's empire fell into the sphere of influence of the rising power of the Hittites for the next century.¹¹⁰

NATURAL DISASTERS

Impossible to predict or to avoid, natural disasters also appear to have seriously

weakened Akhenaten's Egypt and Wang Mang's China and helped to bring about their downfall. For Akhenaten, the disaster may have come in the form of an epidemic, imported from the Near East along trade routes. The historical evidence is indirect, but we see repeated mentions in the Amarna Letters of plague and death besieging Egypt's vassal states along the Phoenician coast, as well as the kingdom on Cyprus.¹¹¹ Both Donald Redford and Jan Assmann suggest that in Tutankhamen's "Restoration Stele," when the young king talks about the "passing through of calamities" (*zni [mn.t]*) that had beset Egypt before his reign, he was actually referring to an epidemic during Akhenaten's time, a pestilence that also sounds echoes in later Ptolemaic sources.¹¹² One scholar has even speculated that the plague might have come to Egypt early in Akhenaten's reign and that he may have moved to the isolated location of Akhetaten to avoid the epidemic.¹¹³ For the people of the ancient world, who did not understand that epidemics were caused by pathogens, plagues always had a divine causation. It is possible that a plague could have been viewed as a curse sent by the gods for Akhenaten's abandonment of their temples.

In the Chinese case, the natural disasters that beset Wang Mang's dynasty were familiar ones: widespread droughts (18–22 CE) and the disastrous flooding of the Yellow River, detailed in [chapter 1](#). Even though Wang Mang's economic reforms caused chaos, and his wars were expensive and unnecessary, he might have persisted as emperor had the Yellow River not changed its course twice in eight years.¹¹⁴ His corrupt government, however, was ill equipped to handle those stresses.¹¹⁵ In China, just as in Egypt, such natural disasters were viewed as having a divine cause. But in early imperial China, disasters were not seen as divine punishment for a lack of offerings, but as an ominous message from Heaven that the ruler of the earthly domain was deficient in virtue and was mishandling his divine charge.

Damnatio Memoriae

Damnatio memoriae is a modern Latin term that describes a practice during the Roman Empire, when a deceased former emperor (e.g., Commodus) was officially condemned by the Senate, which ordered that his statues be taken down and his name be erased from monuments. In Rome, where honor and public appearance meant everything, this was a fate worse than death.¹¹⁶

Similar practices of delegitimizing failed rulers and condemning them to oblivion can be seen in most cultures, both ancient and modern, though the particular form of erasure is culturally determined. In ancient Egypt, where someone's name was an integral part of their person, its erasure, along with the destruction of the mummy and any statues of the deceased, signaled the final destruction of the individual. There could be no afterlife without a physical home for the essence of personhood (i.e., the soul[s]), or at least an inscribed name that someone could read aloud. In early China, social status was a paramount concern, and one's name and title were equated with the person themselves. The conferral of a derogatory posthumous name for a ruler (or the withholding of one) was considered a cruel fate, whereas removal of one's tablet from the ancestral temple, or the massacre of one's descendants, ensured that the soul would starve unto its final destruction in the afterlife. After the

failure of their new orders, both Akhenaten and Wang Mang were removed from the legitimate succession of monarchs by the following dynasty. But whereas Akhenaten's name and image were suppressed to the point that he almost completely disappeared from historical and cultural memory, Wang Mang's memory was deliberately maintained in an elaborate historical narrative to serve as an admonition to future rulers.

Akhenaten probably died in the seventeenth year of his reign, or shortly thereafter (ca. 1333–1332 BCE), and was buried in the royal tomb at Akhetaten that he intended for himself and Nefertiti.¹¹⁷ But his remains and his memory would not be left in peace. Though his new order and his capital survived him by a few years, both were slowly dismantled by his immediate successors, then thoroughly smashed by those who founded the next dynasty. Tutankhaten (Living Image of Aten; r. ca. 1328–1319 BCE), either Akhenaten's son or his half-brother, changed his name to Tutankhamen in year three or four of his reign and moved the capitals back to Memphis and Thebes, restoring generous patronage to the traditional gods and their temples. It does appear that Aten temples were still patronized, however, in a period of coexistence. After Tutankhamen's life was cut short, Ay (r. ca. 1319–1316 BCE), the aged advisor of both Akhenaten and Tutankhamen, reigned for a few years, keeping some of the legacy alive and forestalling the inevitable backlash. But with the accession of Tutankhamen's general Horemheb (r. ca. 1316–1302 BCE), who was a more competent reformer, a great proscription was carried out against Akhenaten's memory, and this would continue into the first few reigns of the following Nineteenth Dynasty.

Akhenaten's burial was unsealed and desecrated. Only fragments of his smashed outer sarcophagus survive. While some scholars believe his body was later transferred to the Valley of the Kings, it is more likely that his mummy was destroyed when his tomb was desecrated.¹¹⁸ Throughout the land, his name was hacked out of inscriptions, and statues and relief images of him were smashed. As one can see in [figure 3.7](#), from the tomb of Ramose at Thebes, the images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti were pecked out with chisels, but the divine image of the sun-disc (Aten) was left untouched. The stone blocks of his capital were nearly all removed by Horemheb and the later Nineteenth Dynasty pharaohs for reuse.¹¹⁹



Figure 3.7. Defaced images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1349 BCE. Carved limestone, tomb of Ramose (TT55), Luxor, Egypt. Photo by Marissa Stevens, Nov. 27, 2015.

Looking at later inscripational and textual sources, we see a conscious attempt to not only remove Akhenaten from the legitimate succession, but also to erase his reign entirely from history. The temple of Seti I at Abydos was

begun by Seti I (r. ca. 1301–1290 BCE) and completed by his son Ramesses II (r. ca. 1290–1224 BCE) during the Nineteenth Dynasty. On the hallway that connects the second hypostyle hall with the southern wing of the temple (the so-called Gallery of Kings) is carved one of the most detailed king lists to survive from ancient Egypt, represented as a list of seventy-six cartouches. Nearby, a young prince Ramesses reads out hymns of praise to these kings, in the presence of his father (fig. 3.8).¹²⁰ The accompanying hieroglyphic text mentions that the spirits of these pharaohs would be invoked by name and receive sacrificial offerings as part of a cult of royal ancestors. The list begins with the ancestral founder of the First Dynasty, Menes (r. ca. 3050 BCE), and ends with Seti. A number of long-dead pharaohs were absent from this list, including the foreign Hyksos kings of the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1640–1532 BCE) as well as the powerful and polarizing female pharaoh Hatshepsut (r. ca. 1473–1458 BCE). Most tellingly, all the rulers of the recent Amarna period are absent, including Akhenaten, as well as his short-reigning successors, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen, and Ay. In fact, the cartouche of Akhenaten's father Amenhotep III is immediately followed by that of Horemheb, effectively erasing decades of Egyptian history. In Ramesside-period documents, the likely fifteen-year-long reign of Horemheb is sometimes extended to an improbable fifty-nine years to help bridge this gap.¹²¹ Through this representation, Akhenaten was not only erased from the legitimate succession, but his spirit was denied sacrifice and sustenance, since his name would never be spoken.

But decades of time cannot be so easily erased in tax, property, and legal records, where chronology is crucial. In the record of a lawsuit from the time of Ramesses II, Akhenaten's reign is referred to as "the time of the enemy of Akhetaten (i.e., Akhenaten's capital),"¹²² and in an official letter regarding tax records, it is said that a person "died in the regnal year nine of *the rebel*," also a reference to Akhenaten.¹²³ What remained in the cultural memory was a vague "time of troubles."¹²⁴

In China, when rebels surrounded Wang Mang's capital in 23 CE, they first attacked his legitimacy by opening up the tombs of his family and desecrating the corpses. They then put his magnificent Nine Ancestral Temples to the torch.¹²⁵ When they finally entered the city and captured Wang Mang, they tore his body to pieces in their hatred. His head was later sent to the rebel stronghold of Wan in Nanyang Commandery, where it was hung in the marketplace, the place for executing criminals. In another act of ritual destruction, an unknown person later cut out Wang Mang's tongue from his severed head and ate it, symbolically silencing him for eternity.¹²⁶ At no later point were his physical remains allowed a proper burial or any sort of monument.

While Wang Mang's monuments were burned to the ground and his physical body dismembered, his name was not stricken from the written record in the same manner as Akhenaten's. It was not the way of Chinese historiography to erase a ruler from history completely, no matter how illegitimate or despised he or she may have become. It was viewed as preferable to use them as a negative exemplar, an admonition to future rulers. But that does not mean that a reviled monarch would be allowed to remain in the legitimate succession, for the Chinese historian had subtle yet devastating methods at his disposal to

consign him (or her, in a few cases) to their proper place in history.



Figure 3.8. “Gallery of Kings,” New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1280 BCE. Carved limestone, temple of Seti I, Abydos, Egypt. Photo by Anthony Barbieri-Low, March 12, 2015.

The official historian conveyed the legitimacy of a monarch through the chapter organization of the chronicles of the dynasty and in the pronouns and verbs used to refer to the person and his or her pronouncements. Most of our information about Wang Mang comes from the lengthy account in *History of the Han*, written by members of the Ban family, but primarily by Ban Gu. Begun as an illicit private historical endeavor, it was later given sanction by the emperor and became an official history of the Western Han period. As such, it was a document designed to sanction the restored rule of the Liu clan, after Wang Mang’s short-lived dynasty, and to dismiss his period of rule as an aberration and a usurpation. The Ban family also had personal reasons to resent Wang Mang, for they had jockeyed for power at court with the Wang family for generations, and Wang Mang’s associates had fired Ban Gu’s grandfather.

The chapter organization of Ban Gu’s *History of the Han* fundamentally follows the structure pioneered by Sima Qian in his *Records of the Grand Scribe*. The first group of twelve chapters in the text are called “annals” (*ji*), which are year-by-year chronicles of events during the reign of the eleven legitimate emperors (and one empress regnant) of the Western Han, from Emperor Gaozu (r. 202–195 BCE) to Emperor Ping (r. 1–5 CE). The fifteen-year reign of Wang Mang (r. 9–23 CE) is intentionally left out of this section, denying his dynasty legitimacy.

The final, and by far the longest, section of *History of the Han* is a group of seventy biographies (and one autobiography) called “traditions” (*zhuan*), which detail the lives of important historical figures or foreign peoples, often grouped thematically. Ban Gu organized those chapters as follows:

- 100 Great ministers, lords, nobles, generals, and great officials and scholars
- 99 Marsh officials
- 98 Moneymakers and industrialists
- 97 Wandering knights and vigilantes
- 96 Male favorites and lovers of the emperors
- 95 Accounts of barbarian groups (e.g., Xiongnu), states of the Western Regions
- 94 Empresses and imperial relatives
- 93 Wang Zhengjun (Wang Mang’s aunt)
- 92 Wang Mang
- 100 Author’s self-introduction

Ban Gu’s devastating assessment of Wang Mang is made clear from the relative placement of his biography within this section. Rather than being placed among the great ministers, nobles, or scholars, he is damned through his

association with the accounts of merchants, passive homosexual partners, barbarians, and women—all denigrated social groups. As an act of humility, it was standard for the author to place his own afterword and autobiography as the last chapter.

Within the “Biography of Wang Mang,” itself, the author carefully adjusts his phrasing to denigrate Wang Mang further and make it clear that he was not a legitimate emperor. For example, the usual phrase employed to refer to the accession of a legitimate ruler was “to approach the throne” (*jiwei*). When referring to Wang Mang’s declaring himself emperor, however, Ban Gu strictly avoids using the sanctioned phrase, instead employing the highly critical “to seize (i.e., to usurp) the throne” (*cuanwei*). In his final assessment, Ban Gu directly says Wang Mang “stole the throne” (*qiewei*).¹²⁷

Furthermore, in the annals of the other Han emperors, the historian uses particular words to describe the edicts of the emperor, namely “imperial decision” (*zhi*) and “imperial instruction” (*zhao*). Ban Gu usually refuses to afford Wang Mang this respectful language and instead refers to his pronouncements as “written documents” (*shu*) or “documents” (*ce*).¹²⁸ Even his grand inaugural edict, which he issued from the throne when he assumed the emperorship on January 15, 9 CE, is referred to in pedestrian terms as, “[he] sent down a written document” (*xiashu*).¹²⁹

Finally, in all the annals chapters of *History of the Han*, previous emperors are never referred to by their personal names, but only by their posthumous titles, such as the Filial and Martial Emperor (Xiao Wu Huangdi; r. 140–87 BCE), the posthumous name of Liu Che. Since Wang Mang was not granted a posthumous title, Ban Gu refers to him throughout his biography by his personal birth name, Mang, a singular sign of disrespect. He almost never employs his original noble title of Marquis of Xindu (Xindu Hou) or his official post of general-in-chief (Dasima), unless they are embedded in documents he quotes at length.

Imagine a similar scenario if a historian of the United States considered that George W. Bush was an illegitimate president, because he lost the popular vote to Al Gore in 2000, and that the twice-impeached Donald J. Trump had been thoroughly disgraced. A former US president is usually afforded the respect of being called Mr. President long after he leaves office. It would be as if this historian listed the legitimate presidents of the last few decades as:

President George Herbert Walker Bush (1989–1993)

President William Jefferson Clinton (1993–2001)

Dubya

President Barack Hussein Obama II (2009–2017)

The Donald

President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. (2021–)

Conclusion

In comparing the radical reforms of Wang Mang and Akhenaten, we can identify a fundamentally similar structural trajectory to their reforms, in which they both desanctified a former, well-entrenched order, then communicated a

new order that was sanctified through a discourse associating the changes with gods and sages. Both rulers also portrayed their reforms as a fundamentalist return to first principles. But, in the end, both regimes met with economic, military, and natural disasters to which they were unable to adapt. Each man ultimately produced no vigorous heir, had his reforms nullified, and was condemned by history.

It is in the differences that we can appreciate the particularities of each case. In the case of Wang Mang, he attempted to manipulate a cash-based, bi-metallic market economy to extract more surplus from elites and commoners and spent more of that on unnecessary wars than on construction projects. Akhenaten increased revenues by releasing (i.e., confiscating) the sequestered wealth of the temples and redirected nearly all of it toward construction projects. Whereas Wang Mang sanctified his actions and his lineage by association with sage-kings of antiquity while still portraying a very mortal image of himself, Akhenaten sought to sanctify his own person as the sole offspring and intermediary of the one divine power. Finally, while later dynasties sought to erase Akhenaten completely from historical and cultural memory, Wang Mang's life was recorded in great detail to serve as an admonition.

After the deaths of the two reformers, it appears at first glance that the old systems they tried to supplant were restored, or at least reformed more successfully. Following a protracted civil war among rival factions, a scion of the Liu house (Liu Xiu, Guangwu Emperor, r. 25–57 CE) restored the Han dynasty with his capital at Luoyang, and after Akhenaten's demise, his successors dismantled both his reforms and buildings and abandoned his sacred capital. By the time of Horemheb, and following him, the Ramesside period (ca. 1302–1086 BCE), it appears that the old system had been fully restored with Amun regaining his position as King of the Gods.

These reformers who arose shortly after Wang Mang's and Akhenaten's failures seem to have learned from those rulers' mistakes and were relatively more successful. For instance, Horemheb's vigorous and conscientious reforms of the military and legal systems, and his anticorruption campaign, probably helped to breathe another century of life into the Egyptian empire. Liu Xiu's steady-handed reestablishment of Han central power at his new capital of Luoyang gained nearly the same duration of reprieve for China, but failed to resolve the systemic stasis that had prompted Wang Mang's reforms.

However, these newly restored dynasties did not reach the level of power and wealth that had been achieved under the earlier prereform regimes, and actually signaled a long final decline for each civilization. The Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE) endured for another two centuries, but was merely a shadow of the former glory of the Western Han. Factional fighting at court between consort families, eunuchs, and officials eventually paralyzed the state; territorial control was seriously diminished; and direct revenue collection was compromised. The state was eventually divided by contending warlords during the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE), and after a brief unification, the north was overrun by barbarians who founded non-Chinese kingdoms. Similarly, the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt witnessed struggles to rebuild or maintain any semblance of its former empire. Weakened by the attack of the Sea Peoples during the reign of Ramesses III (r. ca. 1195–1164

BCE), Egypt also became crippled by court strife, diminished revenue, and foreign incursions. Eventually, the whole of Upper Egypt was commandeered (ca. 1086 BCE) by the high priests of the same Amun cult that Akhenaten contended with more than two centuries earlier. Then, the country experienced a prolonged period of rule by dynasties of Libyan or Nubian descent and eventually the Assyrian and Persian subjugations.¹³⁰ So, while vigorous restorations or more successful late-dynastic reforms might help stave off collapse, such as with the reforms of Diocletian (r. 284–305 CE) after the third-century crisis of the Roman Empire, the reprieve is only temporary. All empires will ultimately fail, because they are complex and unstable political formations that require high inputs of energy and resources to maintain, and their continued health depends on their continued growth.

The imperial dynastic system develops great inertia over time, and any serious reforms are met with great resistance by those who hold power and influence within the system, for when the empire ceases to expand and conquer new sources of wealth for distribution, those stakeholders already in the system will jealously guard the wealth and power they have already acquired. This comparative study of the problem of late dynastic reform suggests that such mature dynasties cannot be successfully reformed from within. The only way to restore dynamism and growth is for the system to be swept away completely through violent rupture, such as foreign invasion, internal revolution, or pandemic, for it is only then that the old aristocracy is removed, population and land pressures are reduced from attrition, and land and wealth is freed from tax-exempt estates. At that point, the process of empire construction begins anew.

Legal Principles and the Administration of Justice

The control of the state over society in New Kingdom Egypt and early imperial China can be gauged through an examination of the key institution of law. Legal principles reveal the core values of the state—those principles that govern human society in the physical world and relate the state to the parallel workings of the cosmic order. And while legal principles reveal the values upon which a state is based, the power and scope of legal infrastructure (e.g., officials, courts, police) show us the extent of the penetration of that state into society. We are fortunate that a small body of comparable legal cases survives from each of these civilizations, for an examination of legal cases is the best way to observe legal principles in operation and to see the interplay between state jurisdiction and local mediation.

Legal Principles

In Egypt, the principle of universal justice, order, and stability in the world, or *maat* (*mɜː.t*), was maintained through the actions of the king, the son of Re and the living Horus on earth. Robberies, assaults, rebellion, and corruption were signs of chaos and falsehood, or *isfet* (*jɜːf.t*), and it was the role of the king to suppress such activities and make the world a well-ordered place.

In practical terms, however, robbery, assault, rape, adultery, and possibly even murder, were treated as private or “civil” matters in Egypt, meaning that they were handled by the individuals involved and their communities, and would be adjudicated by a court only if the injured party brought a suit directly. The resulting penalties usually involved correction of the wrong plus some material compensation, usually a multiple of two or three times the value

in cases of robbery or destruction of property. Infractions that were considered “crimes” were only those that harmed the property or prerogatives of the ruler or the temples of the gods. These were punished by courts of law with floggings, hard labor, banishment, denial of burial, open wounds, mutilation, or death.¹

It is unclear if pharaonic Egypt possessed a code of written statutory law, as did several of the other civilizations of the Near East, such as the Neo-Babylonian empire (626–539 BCE). The sometimes unreliable Greek author Diodorus Siculus (ca. 90–30 BCE) assures us that the Egyptians did possess written statutes, in eight large volumes, but the oldest surviving fragments of statutory law in Egypt only date to the Ptolemaic period (304–30 BCE) and deal exclusively with property rights and inheritance laws.² However, measured levels of crime and matching punishments that appear in a restoration decree by the pharaoh Horemheb (r. ca. 1316–1302 BCE) strongly suggest that New Kingdom Egypt did indeed possess written statutes, though none survive today.³ Some scholars, though, argue that Egyptian law was based on collections of legal rulings and precedents rather than on statutes, comparable to a common law tradition, and that cases were decided based on analogy.⁴ As in China, the word of the Egyptian king had the force of law, and royal decrees were disseminated and collected for reference.

Under the Egyptian system, a person was in principle innocent until proven guilty, either for a crime or in a civil matter. While one could be shown guilty by material evidence or by written or oral testimony of witnesses, eventually a confession was required. If someone relented under torture and confessed to the charges, and the confession could be verified, then a conviction was certain. However, if the person maintained their innocence throughout multiple beatings, and the court could not produce witnesses or concrete evidence, they had to let the person go.

In Egypt, unlike in early imperial China, the oath (*ḥh-n-nb*) was also an important factor during interrogations and trials. Nearly every suspect or witness was encouraged to provide an oath on the life of the ruler, or on a god, swearing that they were telling the truth. The oath usually invoked some horrible punishment for perjury, such as being mutilated or sent to Nubia. It is uncertain if these were just formulaic phrases, or if such penalties for perjury were actually imposed. Both the statements under torture and the oaths were to ensure the validity of the testimony.⁵ A key related principle of the Egyptian legal universe, and one that marks a major difference from the Chinese system, is that the gods often played a pivotal role, for they could reveal guilt or innocence in a case through an oracle.

In early imperial Chinese ideology, the emperor was also a divinely sanctioned ruler who ensured the proper functioning of the cosmos. As in Egypt, chaos and disorder (*luan*) were abhorrent, and it was the task of the ruler to suppress these dangerous elements. Written law was one of the key tools developed during the Warring States period (453–221 BCE) to ensure conformity and order in a world gone mad. Though despised by Confucius and his followers, written laws were nonetheless adopted by nearly every contending state and refined to an incredible degree in the state of Qin, the eventual victor in the interstate struggles and founder of the first centrally controlled territorial empire in East Asia.

What was the purpose of law in early China? According to Teng, the Qin governor of Nan Commandery (ca. 227 BCE), it was “to teach and guide the people, to get rid of their perverse inclinations, to uproot their evil customs, and to enable them to proceed toward doing what is good.” In his view, the laws were created by the sage-kings of antiquity to help correct wrong thinking and to unify the customs of a diverse and unruly population.⁶

However, critical analysis of early imperial law shows that the real purpose of Qin and Han laws was “to serve as both the idealized blueprints for the construction of the engine of the state and the instruction manual for officials to operate its intricate and interrelated mechanisms.”⁷ Thus, the law enabled the projection of state power throughout society, ideally, down to the level of the household and the individual. So, Chinese law was not just penal law. According to the surviving statutes and ordinances, the written laws of Qin and Han China were designed to accomplish many things beyond controlling public order, including managing state finances and labor mobilization, controlling the bureaucracy and flow of information, supervising religious practices, and regulating the family. Thus, the scope of Chinese law was far broader than in pharaonic Egypt and had a far greater impact on the lives of ordinary people.

These rules were written down in tens of thousands of statutes, ordinances, precedents, rulings, and comparable cases, constituting an enormous body of written law, estimated by one source at nearly eight million words by the third century CE.⁸ Only a fraction of this survives today, mostly rescued in recent decades from garbage dumps, wells, or the tombs of legal scribes, such as the tomb of the scribe Xi (ca. 216 BCE; see [chapter 5](#)).

Unlike in Egypt, where assault and robbery were treated as civil matters for resolution, in China all these were considered criminal matters. Crimes in ancient China fell under different “categorical legal principles” (*fa*). Verbal and physical assaults, fighting between private parties, accidental homicide, and even attempted suicide were treated together with rebellion and violation of imperial prerogatives as constituting crimes under the categorical principle of malicious harm (*zei*), to be prosecuted and sentenced by the state with punishments of fines, mutilation, hard labor, and execution. The only exception to the state’s insistence on a monopoly of jurisdiction was in the instance of family crimes, such as a parent beating his child to death, about which the state refused to hear denunciations from family members.⁹

Theft, robbery, embezzlement, extortion, human trafficking, smuggling, and bribery were all considered to fall under the categorical principle of robbery (*dao*) and were punished by the state on a scale ranging from fines up to mutilation and hard labor, based on the value of the illicit profit.

Even sexual offenses such as fornication, adultery, rape, and incest were treated as crimes by the state and prosecuted through official channels. Administrative crimes by officials, such as mistakes, negligence, or incompetence, were punished with fines and redemption fees, whereas corruption and abuse of power were charged under the criminal statutes, often more severely than the equivalent crime for commoners.

The notion of liability (*zuo*) was another key Chinese legal principle. One was liable for a crime as soon as one conceived of the idea (or conspired with others) to commit it. Once a man conspired or committed a crime, he immediately made his whole family liable as well. Furthermore, the Chinese

legal system relied on an elaborate system of mutual responsibility to help enforce the laws. A wife who did not denounce her husband would be impounded along with her children and made a government slave upon his conviction for a major crime. Neighbors were expected to spy on neighbors, and if they did not denounce criminal activity of which they were aware, they could be prosecuted for the same crime. Some anecdotal evidence of spousal mutual responsibility can be found in Egyptian case records, but it does not appear to have been systematic and regular. Both legal systems supported the notion of reciprocal punishment, where the provider of a false accusation or false testimony could be prosecuted for the same crime he or she tried to implicate another person in, but the Chinese system of *fanzui* (reversal of crime) seems far more developed.

In the early imperial Chinese legal system, the purpose of any investigation was to get to the *qing*, a word we might translate as “truth,” but which technically means “the facts of the matter,”—that is, what really happened. Investigators would use any means necessary to get to the truth, including autopsies and forensic examinations, written evidence, oral testimony, and judicial torture. And even though it appears that some officers may have used divination to track down criminals (a practice not legally sanctioned), as far as we know, they never consulted oracles of the gods in legal decisions. Similar to the Egyptian legal principle, no person in early imperial China could be convicted without a confession or “submission” (*fu*) to the charges against him or her. Indeed, it appears from surviving cases in China that even witnesses and concrete evidence were not enough for a conviction, and admission of guilt was required. In their zeal to achieve this confession (through judicial torture), investigators often compromised the fundamental first goal of *qing*.

Legal Infrastructure

The early imperial Chinese legal system was highly proactive in that it sought not only to address crime and injustice when they occurred, but also to actively prevent crime, police the entire empire, and encourage official and private denunciations of any suspected criminal activity. Generous bounties in gold were offered to private individuals who could arrest criminals, or at least provide information leading to their arrest.

To maintain such a system required an enormous bureaucratic apparatus, nested within an elaborate hierarchy of jurisdiction and oversight. At the village level, the mutual responsibility “groups of five” (*wu*) and the village chief ensured compliance with the law, while the roads between towns were patrolled by constables, patrol leaders, and thief catchers, operating from regularly-spaced stations. The backbone of the system was the county court, which maintained specialized bureaus that conducted inquests, investigations, interrogations, trials, and the sentencing in criminal cases. Capital cases and ones too difficult for local authorities to resolve were usually referred up to higher levels in the system, but most could be handled at the county level. The commandery court often overlapped with the county court in terms of jurisdiction, but also constituted a court of appeal and oversight for the lower court. In the capital, the commandant of the court presided over a court of final

decision, occasionally asking the emperor himself to rule on difficult or important cases.

In comparison, the legal system in New Kingdom Egypt was nowhere near as elaborate or proactive as that seen in China. There was a police force of Nubians from the eastern desert called the Medjay (*mdj.y*) who protected the king, the royal necropolis, and some other state installations like mines or waterways, but they did not patrol all the settlements and roads of the kingdom as did the constables and thief catchers of Han China. Thus, there was no one to actively prevent assailants or robbers from preying on the average individual, unless he or she could afford private security guards. Though Egypt did not deploy a formal system of community spying and mutual responsibility as in China, community was still an important factor in preventing crime, for surviving records demonstrate that neighbors knew almost everything that went on in a community and public shame could always be a strong deterrent against wrongdoing.

In New Kingdom Egypt there was a court system known as the *kenbet* (*knb.t*). From at least from the reign of Horemheb onward, there were in practice two different types of *kenbet*. There was the Great Kenbet, which was like the Supreme Court. The vizier sat on this court along with other high officials. But Horemheb also sought to establish local courts in towns throughout Egypt. The local *kenbet* usually consisted of the village elders, almost always males. It met irregularly, and responded to complaints and lawsuits, but did not actively seek out wrongdoing or deter it with a show of force. In a *kenbet* trial, a plaintiff would come forward and make a claim such as “Someone stole something from me.” The *kenbet* would then ask, “Where are the witnesses?” and “Where is the defendant?” A wronged individual had to conduct his own investigation, gather his own evidence, argue his own case, and haul in his own witnesses. The court did not assist. The court would then interrogate everyone involved. They might even beat everyone involved, including the plaintiff. Then, they would decide the matter. The local court had very little power of enforcement, however, for they could not imprison or corporally punish. They would usually just make the person swear an oath to make restitution to the other party or to desist from wrong actions.



Figure 4.1. Amenhotep I statue in procession, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1250 BCE. East wall of tomb of Khabekhnet (TT2), Deir el-Medina, Egypt. From Černý, “Le culte d’Amenophis,” 187, fig. 13.

Based on written evidence from Deir el-Medina, the workman’s village of the men who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, most civil matters such as contract violation, robbery, and assault were dealt with by the local community through either the local *kenbet* court of respected men or by beseeching the gods.¹⁰ So, if one was reluctant to approach the local court, the

only other legal recourse for a person with a complaint was to inquire after an oracle from a god. Oracles became important as a political tool no later than the Eighteenth Dynasty. The female pharaoh Hatshepsut (r. ca 1473–1458 BCE) was one of the first to use oracles to legitimate her position as king. Accordingly, a king could rely on these oracles to sanction some political measure they felt necessary for the empire. Evidence from Deir el-Medina shows that oracles were also used for judiciary purposes, particularly at the local level. The oracle was basically a statue of the god. In [figure 4.1](#), we see a statue of the deified pharaoh Amenhotep I (a patron deity of Deir el-Medina) being carried around in procession by eight priests. Such processions often occurred during scheduled religious festivals. A person could interrupt the procession, stand before the god and make a complaint, asking the god to decide his case. The men carrying the litter would respond, through some sort of auto-suggestion. If they moved the litter forward, it signaled agreement with the complaint, but if they moved backward, it was a denial of the complaint. Sometimes, texts mention that the god would actually speak, but we do not know who spoke for the statue. Perhaps it was one of the priests. A person might present his case to the god orally, or he could position sherds of inscribed pottery or ostraca on the ground before the god, and the god's litter would tip in the direction of the ostrakon on which was written the proper resolution of the case.¹¹

The chief legal officer of the land was the vizier (*t3.tj*) who was the prime minister for pharaoh, responsible for the bureaucracy, the army, the legal system, foreign affairs, and all finance. There were often two viziers appointed, and they operated two permanent *kenbet* courts, one in Heliopolis and one in Thebes, that tried major cases of official corruption, treason, or violations of royal prerogative, and acted as a court of appeal for civil and criminal rulings from local courts. The vizier supposedly maintained an archive of legal decisions and precedents that he could consult, and a “great prison,” where offenders were held pending trial and later punished. He also dispensed punishments including forced labor, floggings, open wounds, mutilation, and death, which kept the pharaoh's hands clean and allowed him to maintain the moral high ground. In comparative terms, he basically combined the duties of the commandant of the court (Ting Wei), the chief prosecutor (Yushi Dafu), and the chief minister (Chengxiang) of the Han empire.

The Legal Cases

We are fortunate to possess written records of a handful of actual legal cases from New Kingdom Egypt and early imperial China through which we can compare how the legal principles and infrastructure just described played out in the real world. The following pairs of comparable cases fall into four areas: (1) infringement on sacred property; (2) ordinary theft; (3) fornication and adultery; and (4) testamentary wills.

All human societies generate disputes, be they over movable property, land, or prestige, and every society has a procedure for punishing criminals and deviants who go against the ruling elite or the social order. In ancient Egypt and early China, these disputes and trials were sometimes written down on

bamboo, papyrus, or ostraca by various interested parties. Why was this done? Moreover, since the central and local government archives of both cultures have long ago been destroyed, why do we still have these cases to examine today?

Nearly all of the early Chinese legal cases discussed here are drawn from the *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases* (Zouyan shu). This legal compilation of twenty-two case records (at least two of which were fictional anecdotes) was found in the tomb of a legal scribe (Zhangjiashan tomb number 247). Though the tomb is dated to 186 BCE, the compilation itself was drawn together over many decades from multiple sources and came into its final form only a few years before it was copied out for burial in a tomb. The majority of the case records in the compilation were generated by an appeals process in Qin and Han China in which county officials who were in doubt as to the proper sentence in a case could forward it for decision by higher authorities. If those authorities could not resolve the case, it could be forwarded all the way up to the commandant of the court or the emperor for resolution. Central government officials and local officials apparently kept collections of these former rulings, as a guide to procedure and as a form of precedent, to aid them in their legal duties. However, the case records in *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases* are not all that they appear to be. As legal scribes copied these case records and distributed them to each other, they started to embellish the cases to emphasize certain characters and enhance the “plot” of the case. Sometimes they appended entire manuscript sections to change the outcome of the case. In short, copying and editing the case records became a kind of literary exercise, beyond the primary role of preserving them as reference material for prosecuting cases.¹²

The book itself was found in a tomb, which is the only reason we have it today. It was buried with a collection of other texts, including mathematical, medical, and political texts that may have served multiple functions for the deceased. They served as a marker of his identity and occupation (as a legal scribe) and of his status (as a literate, honored elder). They may have also provided him with reference material he could use in an underworld bureaucracy, where the deceased legal scribe might be asked to perform similar duties as he had performed in life.

The will of Zhu Ling and the Old Woman (translated later in this chapter) is preserved for us because it was placed in the tomb of the woman who helped generate it. According to Han laws, dictated wills had to be written down in triplicate form, with copies presumably going to the testator’s family and local authorities. If there were disputes about the will, the local authorities could consult the copy on file to verify any property arrangements. When Zhu Ling’s mother, the matriarch behind all the property arrangements, arranged to have the will placed in her tomb, she was probably also hoping to secure supernatural enforcement.

A small amount of early imperial legal material, much of it fragmentary, has been excavated from garbage dumps at sites like Juyan in Gansu, or well dumps like at the Liye site. A small body of Qin and Han legal case records were transmitted all the way up to the present, for they were included in larger works of history such as *Records of the Grand Scribe* of Sima Qian or *History of the Han* by Ban Gu.

For Egyptian civilization, no legal records were transmitted to the present, since the transmission of nearly all of Egyptian literate culture was cut off when the language ceased to be written and understood around 400 CE. Only a few corrupted generalizations and supposed laws are given to us by classical authors like Herodotus (ca. 484–425 BCE) or Diodorus Siculus.

The vizier of New Kingdom Egypt supposedly kept a huge archive of legal decisions in his office to use as precedents for legal cases, but obviously none survive today. The famous “Tomb Robbery Papyri,” which record the trials at the Great Kenbet in Thebes presided over by the vizier, actually did not come from that office. Though the documents entered the illegal antiquities market in the nineteenth century, scholars have reconstructed that they probably came from sealed jars plundered from the site of Medinet Habu, which was the mortuary temple of Ramesses III (r. ca. 1195–1164 BCE) on the west bank at Thebes. During the worsening political conditions at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty (1198–1086 BCE), all of the necropolis workers and administrators were moved for their own safety inside the walls of this great temple, which might explain why the records were kept there. Some of the Tomb Robbery Papyri show evidence that they were reused by later occupants of the temple to record grain rations or other unrelated matters.

The will of Naunakhte, translated later in this chapter, was kept for several generations as part of a family archive by her descendants. Many of the manuscripts in this archive were used by later generations of the family as a source of ready papyrus, for one finds practice texts and accounts written on the verso of many of them. It appears from other references in private letters that the family library was stored in a tomb or tomb chapel of a member of the lineage for safekeeping. Excavators and thieves emptied the archive in 1928 at the Deir el-Medina necropolis.¹³

The Deir el-Medina village and cemeteries comprise the most plentiful source of legal material from New Kingdom Egypt. The residents conducted a local court and also took their disputes to the oracle of the god. They were the most literate population in the ancient world, with literacy estimates ranging from 25 to 40 percent or higher for the adult males.¹⁴ Starting in the early Twentieth Dynasty, the residents wrote hundreds of legal records on ostraca of limestone, including records of civil suits of debts, but also records of robbery, adultery, and other offenses.¹⁵ The local residents appear to have kept these records for reference in case the legal disputes continued, and they needed to recall the details of earlier decisions.¹⁶ Eventually, nearly all of these ostraca ended up in the “great pit,” a huge garbage dump at the site. Thus, just as in China, garbage dumps and tombs form our greatest repository of legal material.

INFRINGEMENT ON SACRED PROPERTY

According to the surviving statutes of the Qin and Han dynasties, theft or embezzlement of government property (e.g., grain, livestock, cloth, cash, gold) by a private individual was usually treated in the same way as theft of private property, under the categorical principle of robbery (*dao*). Embezzlement of government property by an official with supervision over resources was treated similarly, except in extreme cases of corruption, when the death penalty was invoked.¹⁷

However, theft of certain government items was classified differently. It appears that theft of sacrificial food, clothing, or objects intended for the gods, and items buried or housed in funerary shrines or tombs of royalty, was categorized as malicious harm (*zei*) and punished far more severely than regular theft, because it demonstrated an intent to cause harm to the prerogatives and power of the ruler and/or the gods and endangered the dynasty. Thus, it was a heinous crime, equivalent to rebellion or impiety and warranted much more severe punishment.

We can get some sense of the level of aggravation in penalty by looking at a few passages from the so-called *Answers to Questions on Legal Principles and Statutes* (Falü dawen) text from Shuihudi tomb number 11:

When the sacrifices of the ducal [house] are not yet cleared away, stealing the preparations that would [normally] match a fine or lesser [penalty]: shave [the criminal] and make him a bondservant.¹⁸

This passage demonstrates that theft of sacrificial meats, intended for the gods or ancestors, carried a heavier penalty than regular theft of private or government property. Though the cash value of the goods may have only warranted a fine, the penalty was upgraded to undergoing shaving of the whiskers and being made a bondservant, a fairly severe hard-labor punishment.¹⁹

What about the theft of more valuable sacrificial items buried in the earth or those placed in funerary shrines or imperial tombs? According to *Records of the Grand Scribe*, Qin rulers buried enormous amounts of wealth in sacrifices to various deities, including spirits of rivers and mountains. Often these included valuable caches of jades, a tempting underground treasure for thieves. Another inquiry in *Answers to Questions on Legal Principles and Statutes* defines some of terms involved:

What is the meaning of “stealing or digging up ‘the pure?’” At the sacrifices of the royal house, the preparations are buried; This is what is referred to as “the pure.”²⁰

Obviously, once they were buried underground, the state did not surrender ownership of these items to the general population. In effect, ownership was now transferred to the gods. If a miscreant ventured to dig up such treasures, he was not stealing from the Qin state but from the gods, so the penalty would have been greater than for normal theft, as we saw in the case of stolen sacrificial meats. We have not yet found the passage from the statutes that would punish such a heinous theft, but since the normal theft of such a valuable object would carry a penalty one degree less than the death penalty, I believe, in this case, digging up royal sacrifices would warrant execution.

There is strong support for this suggestion in the following legal case summary, involving a theft of valuable items from a funerary shrine of a deceased emperor. The case is recorded in *Records of the Grand Scribe* of Sima Qian and was not archaeologically excavated.²¹ It transpired around 160 BCE, under the reign of Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 BCE) of the Han. In the case, an

unnamed thief stole some jade rings from the funerary shrine of Emperor Gaozu, Emperor Wen's father, and was apprehended. The case was sent to the commandant of the court, Zhang Shizhi (d. ca. 150 BCE), for prosecution. Zhang recommended simple beheading of the thief, as the law prescribed for the theft of objects or clothing from imperial funerary shrines. Emperor Wen wanted to inflict the supreme penalty of exterminating the thief and his entire family (*miezu*). Zhang countered that penalties should be proportionate and leave room for the punishment of other worse crimes. What if, Zhang conjectured, the man had dug up the actual tomb of Emperor Gaozu and desecrated his corpse; what worse penalty would be left to inflict upon him then?

Just as in early imperial China, theft of items from a royal or noble tomb in ancient Egypt was punished far more harshly than regular theft. The group of Ramesside-era papyri, introduced earlier, known as the "Tomb Robbery Papyri" detail the investigations, interrogations, and punishment of several men convicted of violating the tombs of former kings and queens in the Valley of the Kings and the nearby Valley of the Queens during the relatively weak and unstable Twentieth Dynasty of the New Kingdom, mostly during the reigns of Ramesses IX (r. ca. 1137–1118 BCE) and Ramesses XI (r. ca. 1115–1086 BCE).²²

In several of the cases, the men just confessed to taking portable items of silver, gold, bronze, or cloth from a tomb, but in other cases, they described more heinous crimes of desecration. A passage from one papyrus gives the confession of the thief Amenpanefer:

We went to rob the tombs in accordance with our regular habit, and we found the pyramid [tomb] of King Sobekemsaf II (Seventeenth Dynasty, r. ca. 1570s BCE), this being not at all like the pyramids and tombs of the nobles which we habitually went to rob. We took our copper tools and forced a way into the pyramid of this king through its innermost part. We found its underground chambers, and we took lighted candles in our hands and went down. Then we broke through the rubble that we found at the mouth of his recess, and found this god lying at the back of his burial place. And we found the burial place of Queen Nubkhaes, his queen, situated beside him, it being protected and guarded by plaster and covered with rubble. This also we broke through, and found her resting [there] in like manner. We opened their sarcophagi and their coffins in which they were, and found the noble mummy of the king equipped with a falchion; a large number of amulets and jewels of gold were upon his neck, and his headpiece of gold was upon him. The noble mummy of the king was completely bedecked with gold, and his coffins were adorned with gold and silver inside and out, and inlaid with all kinds of precious stones. We collected the gold we found on the noble mummy of this god, together with [that on] his amulets and jewels which were on his neck and [that on] the coffins in which he was resting, [and we] found [the] queen in exactly the same state. We collected all that we found upon her likewise, and set fire to their coffins.²³

Most of the legal documents regarding the Twentieth Dynasty Theban tomb robberies are recordings of investigations, interrogations, or confessions and do not indicate the final punishment. Sometimes the case is mentioned as having been forwarded to the vizier or to the king for determination of punishment.

One papyrus does mention the specific penalty for seven of the tomb robbers: “Thieves put to death upon the wood, previously, seven men.”²⁴

The phrase “to cause to die upon the wood” (*rđi mwt hr tp ht*) has been interpreted by most scholars as signifying impalement upon a stake.²⁵ This was a gruesome and potentially slow form of death, also seen in Babylonian laws and on Assyrian stone reliefs.²⁶ The punishment appears to have been carried out directly in front of one temple at which a theft took place, to serve not only as a gruesome deterrent to other thieves, but also as a human sacrifice and ritual compensation to the god of the temple whose property was desecrated.²⁷ One of the suspects in the tomb robberies states, “I saw the punishment which was meted out to the thieves in the time of the vizier Khaemwaset. What would be the point of my going to seek out certain death?”²⁸

Though Chinese courts did not order men impaled, they did have a sickening array of dismemberment and decapitation penalties that were etymologically and historically related to sacrificial rituals for animals or war captives. The Zhangjiashan laws from early imperial China mention that the penalty for tomb robbery, meaning ordinary tomb robbery, not necessarily the tombs of rulers, was to undergo *zhe*, which can be translated as “being carved into pieces with exposure of the corpse.”²⁹ The exposure of the corpse served both as further humiliation and as a warning to those who might commit similar heinous offenses.

ORDINARY ROBBERY

In Qin and Han China, robbery (from a person) or theft (of unattended property) were categorized as crimes, with exact penalties stipulated in writing. Officials determined the fair-market value in cash coins of the stolen goods at the time of arrest, and the criminal was punished based on a scale of values (1–21 coins, 22–109, 110–219, 220–660, 661 coins on up), resulting in fines for the lower offenses and mutilation and hard labor for the higher-value crimes.³⁰ There was no room for leeway, and it does not appear that financial restitution or reparations could resolve the offense as it could in Egypt.

Case no. 17 from *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases* is a typical example of medium-level theft from early China. It transpired in 246 BCE in the preimperial state of Qin and is outlined in the following summary.

Someone left their cow grazing outside the town gates of Qian, when a man named Mao stole the cow and tried to bring it to market to sell as his own. The market officials caught him, because he did not have proper documents to prove it was his cow to sell. They charged him with robbery, which, based on the value of a cow, would mean branding on the face and a hard-labor sentence.

The officials believed Mao was weak and incompetent, and that there was no way he could have stolen the cow himself, so they beat him until he falsely identified one of his associates as an accomplice, a state musician named Jiang. Jiang gave an alibi that he was performing musical services for the king and other compulsory labor, but the officials did not believe him. They beat both men savagely until they confessed, branded them on the face, and sent them to a labor camp. Jiang’s wife, children, and property were also impounded by the state.

Months later, in a remarkable appeal from prison, Jiang was able to prove his innocence to the court, and the officials who overenthusiastically tortured him and Mao to get a confession were reprimanded for violating legal procedures. Even though the appeals system released Jiang from his mistaken sentence, and his family and property were returned to him, his face had already been branded, so he could not return to life as an ordinary person. He was made a person of “hidden office status,” which was a liminal status between ordinary commoner and mutilated criminal, and left on his own recognizance. Mao was still guilty, so his sentence probably was not reduced.

Let us now compare the case of “Mao Stealing the Cow” with a roughly analogous Egyptian case of petty theft, the case of “The Stolen Shirts of Qaha.” From surviving legal cases from New Kingdom Egypt, it appears that theft of private property was a civil matter and not a criminal concern as it was in China. The injured party brought suit to a local court (or to the oracle of a god) and sued for restitution and compensation, usually as a multiple of three or two times the value of the original items. There are no surviving cases where theft of private property was treated as a criminal offense, requiring mutilation, hard labor, or the hefty fines seen in China.

The case transpired around 1160 BCE, during the reign of Ramesses IV (r. ca. 1164–1156 BCE), in the village of Deir el-Medina. The case was brought by a simple workman named Qaha who had two of his shirts stolen. But, rather than going to the municipal *kenbet* with his complaint, where he would be required to bring evidence and witnesses (and might be beaten for his trouble), he went to the oracle of the god (the statue of the deified Amenhotep I) to ask for the culprit to be identified. Here is the text of the case, recorded on both sides of an ostrakon of limestone (fig. 4.2):

Year 5 [of the reign of Ramesses IV] (ca. 1160 BCE), third month of inundation, day 28. The chisel-bearer Qaha called to [the statue of the deified] King Amenhotep, “life, prosperity, and health,” saying, “My good lord, come today, because my two garments have been stolen!” And he brought the scorpion-charmer Amenmese, saying, “Read out the houses of the settlement!” They were read out. Now when the house of the scribe Amennakht [son of Ipuy], was reached, he (viz., the god) agreed, saying, “They are with his daughter.”

In the presence of witnesses:

Scribe ..., Aapatjau, Neferhotep, Iyerniutef, Hay, and guardian Khay.

And the gang was standing ... Then the scribe Amennakht [son of Ipuy] stood in the presence of the god, saying, “As for the garments you mentioned, did the daughter of the scribe Amennakht [son of Ipuy] (i.e., my daughter) steal them?” And the god agreed.³¹

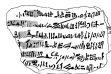


Figure 4.2. “The Stolen Shirts of Qaha” case, New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, ca. 1160 BCE. Facsimile line drawing, after painted limestone ostrakon, H 11.5 cm, W 18 cm, Deir el-Medina, Egypt. Ashmolean Museum, O. Ashmolean 4 (O. Gardiner 4), recto. After Černý and Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, plate 27A.3.

We see here that Qaha did not just ask the god to name the person who committed the crime. He brought a local sorcerer who called out the names of every house in the village, and when he reached a certain house, the god's cult statue dipped forward, indicating the culprit who stole the shirts. In this case, the god also verbally named the culprit as the daughter of one of the village leaders, the scribe of the royal tomb, Amennakht, son of Ipuy, who was a very powerful official in the village and a presiding member of the *kenbet* (see more on Amennakht in [chapter 5](#)).

Is it no wonder that Qaha did not take his complaint to the local court? This lowly worker would have had a great deal of difficulty there, because the father of the person who stole the shirts was presiding over the court. Yet, he could go to the oracle of the god, where the god could identify the culprit, and the village leader would have to abide by this decision. One might also ask why litter bearers of the image of the god nodded when the sorcerer called out the house of Amennakht. It is likely that everyone in the village already knew who stole the shirts, and the oracle system was the only way that they could get at the culprit without going through the court system. The litter bearers were also members of the community, serving as temporary priests. They must also have known who stole the shirts, but the only legitimate way they could implicate the village leader's daughter was to express this through the oracle, delivering the consensus judgment of the community. In this case, a lack of witnesses or physical evidence could have made a court case difficult, leaving the oracle as the only route to justice open to Qaha.³²

We do not have a record of what happened to Amennakht's daughter. It is very unlikely that she was punished in any way. She or her father may have had to make a pledge to pay material restitution, up to three times the value of the items, but no one would have been imprisoned or beaten. In Qin or Han China, the theft of two small items of clothing would not have been as serious as Mao's stealing of the cow, but the perpetrator would still have received a very heavy fine in gold, nearly one hundred times the value. Stealing items of greater value would have led to mutilating punishment and hard labor.

From this brief comparison, we see that instances of theft and robbery in Egypt were settled locally, either by the village court or by the oracle of the god and were not considered crimes under the jurisdiction of the state. In China, where all robbery was classed as a crime, police and market officials were constantly on the lookout for thieves. The written robbery statutes were very mechanically applied, resulting in serious penalties. The spirits were not involved in Chinese legal cases, either in identifying the culprit or in proving his guilt or innocence.

It would be misguided to interpret this difference in the treatment of robbery and theft to mean that the Chinese state was concerned with guaranteeing the "rights" of property owners, for no such rights were ever defined for early China. Robbery was prosecuted as a crime in China, because it was seen as a violation of the universal social order guaranteed by the emperor. While the pharaoh in Egypt was also said to guarantee universal order and protect the weak from the depredations of robbers, his state was unwilling or unable to put the infrastructure in place to enforce this guarantee down to the local level, delegating such enforcement to traditional village and clan structures.

In many societies in the ancient Near East, fornication between consenting individuals was rarely a subject for legal enforcement by the state. Rape and sodomy might be classed as crimes and receive state-sanctioned punishment, but adultery was viewed less as a threat to the social order and the state than as an affront to the prestige of the cuckolded male.

In Egyptian texts the common word used to describe copulation was *nk*. This word was used to describe everything from regular marital sexual relations to premarital fornication, adultery, and even rape. Adulterous sex with a lover might be referred to by the surprisingly modern-sounding euphemisms “to make love” (*jri mr[.wt]*)³³ or “to sleep [with]” (*sdr*).³⁴ Consensual adultery between a man and a woman was not classed as a crime warranting prosecution by the state, but might result in civil action or community intervention, as will be seen shortly.

Egyptian wisdom texts, such as *Instructions of Ptahhotep*, warned that when visiting a friend’s home, having relations with his women could bring temporary pleasure, but would eventually “result in death, for having known them.”³⁵ This could be interpreted to mean that the threatened death would not come from the legal courts, but would be inflicted as revenge by the husband of the adulterous wife.³⁶ This is supported by literary texts like *Tale of Two Brothers*, in which the older brother Anubis tried to kill his younger brother, Bata, when he believed that he had slept with Anubis’s wife.³⁷ As in most ancient cultures, such vengeful killing must take place at the moment of discovery of the fornicating couple, or it could be classified as murder. It has been suggested that adultery usually resulted in repudiation and divorce of the woman and social exclusion or a demand for compensation from the offending man.³⁸ If adultery could be proved, a woman could also lose her dowry or premarital property during a divorce.

In the list of accusations sent to the vizier against the notorious Paneb, foreman of the Deir el-Medina work crew that dug the royal tombs, Paneb is accused of having copulated (*nk*) with a number of married women of the village (and one mother and daughter pair), after his more serious crimes of theft and bribery were enumerated.³⁹ These adulterous episodes appear to have been included in the accusations more to highlight Paneb’s bad character, and possibly his abuse of power, since the women were the wives of his subordinates. The accusations were probably not intended to point out crimes that should be prosecuted by the vizier.⁴⁰

In contrast, Qin and Han laws classed many forms of “illicit intercourse” (*jian*) as regular crimes, not as family matters or causes for civil redress, and attempted to prosecute them through the regular judicial process. This shows a greater concern on the part of the state in China to penetrate into the bedrooms of the empire and regulate sexual behavior. It may also be that by prosecuting sexual incidents like adultery, the state was striving to maintain a monopoly on sanctioned violence, hoping to prevent the type of extralegal killings that resulted when adulterous affairs were discovered by husbands, a type of killing apparently sanctioned in ancient Egypt, based on literary evidence.

In the preimperial Qin laws and model reports found in Shuihudi tomb number 11, it is clear that by the mid-third century BCE, fornication was

considered a regular crime, denounceable to the state, and not a family offense outside of government jurisdiction (like beating one's child to death). Regular persons were encouraged to report such activities to the authorities or could apprehend the criminals themselves.

A model legal report from the *Models for Sealing and Physical Examinations* (Fengzhi shi) from Shuihudi reads:

Illicit Intercourse. Formal Report: Person A, a member of the rank-and-file of X Village, brought in the man B and the woman C. His denunciation stated: "B and C have engaged in illicit intercourse. Yesterday, in the daytime I saw them at the place such-and-such. I arrested them in the act and I have come to bring them in [to the authorities]." ⁴¹

It is not clear from the model document, which has been stripped of many details, if either the man or the woman was married, what ages they were, or what their eventual punishment was. The key point in the report is that the couple were arrested "in the act" (*jiao shang*). ⁴² The arresting party has even hauled them in to the authorities, presumably to receive a bounty, which was commonly given out for arresting those guilty of serious crimes.

In the early Han statutes regarding illicit intercourse found at the Zhangjiashan site, the key factors in determining guilt and the proper sentence focus on the status of the participants and whether or not the perpetrator used force. For example, if a male slave engaged in consensual illicit intercourse with his mistress or the master's mother or daughter, which involved a very great difference in status, the punishment was execution, and the woman was severely punished as well. ⁴³ For cases of incest, the severity of the crime depended on the closeness of the relationship. Incest between siblings born of the same mother warranted execution, but for incest with more distant relatives, the crime warranted decreasingly severe penalties. ⁴⁴ For regular consensual adultery among married people of the same status, each party was left intact (i.e., not permanently mutilated) and was made a hard-labor convict. Here is the basic Han statute on adultery:

For all those who engage in consensual illicit intercourse with other men's wives and for those with whom [they have fornicated]: in every case, leave [the criminal] intact and make [him or her] a wall-builder or grain-pounder. Should [the man] be an official, sentence him [according to the statutes on] engaging in illicit intercourse through force. ⁴⁵

The case record from early China confirms that for adultery or other incidents involving consensual illicit intercourse, the couple had to be caught in the act to make a valid case. Moreover, in all cases of rape, the person who was forced was to have the liability for the crime of illicit intercourse removed, but nowhere is it stated how such force was to be demonstrated. The perpetrator of rape in an equal-status situation was castrated and made a eunuch in the palace. ⁴⁶ Also, as indicated in the statute, when it was an official who engaged in illicit intercourse with another man's wife, he was to be prosecuted for rape, for it was technically impossible for the woman to consent or object, given the official's position of power over her.

A case of illicit intercourse transpired in the Egyptian village of Deir el-Medina, probably during the reign of Ramesses III. A lowly servant of one of the workmen married the daughter of another workman. At some point after he had paid the bride price, but before he had set up a separate residence with her, he found the arrogant wastrel Merysekhmet, son of the draftsman Menna, in bed with her. The case was recorded on a relatively expensive piece of papyrus, which suggests it may have been developed into a literary piece (fig. 4.3):⁴⁷

As for me, I am a servant of Ameneminet, a member of the crew. I brought the bundle (i.e., the bride price) to the house of Payom, and I made his daughter my wife. Now when I had spent the night in the house of my father, I set out to go to his (viz., Payom's) house, and I found the workman Merysekhmet, son of Menna, sleeping with my wife in the fourth month of summer, day 5. I went out and told the officials; but the officials gave me one hundred blows of a stick, saying, "Really, what are you saying!" Then the chief workman Inherkhau said, "Really, what means this giving the one hundred blows to the one who carried the bundle, while another fornicates? What the officials have done is a great crime."

Then the scribe of the royal tomb, Amennakht [son of Ipuy], made him (viz., Merysekhmet) swear an oath of the lord, life, prosperity, and health!, saying, "As Amun endures, as the ruler endures, if I speak with her, the wife, my nose and my nostrils and ears will be [cut off], and I will be exiled to the land of Kush."

But, he went again, and made her pregnant. Then the workman Menna, his father, placed him before the officials, and the scribe Amennakht [son of Ipuy] made him swear an oath of the lord, life, prosperity, and health!, again saying, "If I go to the place where the daughter of Payom is, I will be set to breaking stone in the quarry of Elephantine" ... the good thing that the officials instituted.



Figure 4.3. "A Case of Illicit Intercourse," New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, reign of Ramesses III (ca. 1195–1164 BCE). Black ink on papyrus, left part: H 22.5 cm, W 8 cm; right part: H 19 cm, W 4 cm, Deir el-Medina, Egypt. P. DeM 27, recto, © IFAO.

One of the most shocking aspects of this case is that when the offended husband went to village officials to denounce Merysekhmet for fornicating with his wife, the officials beat him with sticks for making the complaint. This was probably because of his lowly status and the fact that he was denouncing the son of an important person in the village. What would have happened if he had actually killed Merysekhmet when he found him in bed with his wife? Would this have been sanctioned? Why did he not repudiate his wife then and there?

These unexplained issues might be related to his inferior social status as a servant. And why was the wife still living at her father's house and not with her new husband? Is this also related to the status of the husband as a servant, which put him in an inferior position to complain about adultery or take retributive action?⁴⁸

Eventually, the servant obtains a hearing with the foreman Inherkhau, who realizes the servant has been unfairly treated, and Amennakht son of Ipuy, the scribe of the royal tomb, the village leader whose daughter stole Qaha's shirts, makes the offending Merysekhmet take an oath not to sleep with the wife again. In the oath, he promises that if he transgresses again, may he be mutilated and exiled. These, of course, would be the punishments for perjury and not for adultery, but even those are basically formulaic phrases and would probably not be enforced. Because the oath was taken on the life of the ruler, it was still a serious matter, and breaking such an oath could involve state authorities in later court actions.⁴⁹ When Merysekhmet violates his oath, and this time gets the wife pregnant, it is his father who intervenes and forces him to take another oath not to approach the wife again. This case can be seen as evidence of the weak enforcement of legal decisions in the village of Deir el-Medina.⁵⁰ Even with three of the most powerful men in the village behind the injured party, they still cannot enforce their will against Merysekhmet.

From early imperial China, we have the remarkable sex case from *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases*. The case record is too lengthy to reproduce here, but has been translated several times, so I will summarize.⁵¹ The case concerns a newly widowed woman, a resident of Du County in the capital area. Soon after her husband's death, this woman fornicated with her lover in a room near the place where her husband's coffin was laid out and where her mother-in-law, who had come to her late son's residence, was performing the mourning rites. The next morning, the widow's mother-in-law denounced her to local authorities, and she was arrested. The county court was in doubt as to the proper sentence and so forwarded the case to the capital, where the commandant of the court and the legal officials in his ministry deliberated regarding which statutes she had violated and therefore which punishment she should receive.

The officials came to the unanimous conclusion that the widow's crime should be matched with the "secondary penalty for lacking filial piety and acting like a scold," and therefore they prepared to inform Du County that it should punish the widow with the hard-labor sentence of being made a "grain-pounder," even though the arresting officials did not catch her in the act as was required. Since her husband was dead, the officials apparently tried to make the extended argument that the widow was committing a breach of filial piety against her mother-in-law by having sex with a lover during her husband's mourning rites. This is where the original case ends. After this point, some later legal scribe has appended a literary fantasy in which another legal scribe demonstrates that the judgment was too harsh, since the widow could not really be held accountable for showing contempt for a husband who is no longer living, and furthermore should not have been sentenced at all for illicit intercourse, since she was not arrested during the act.

In comparison to the case of the adulterous Merysekhmet from Egypt, several points stand out. The first is that the supreme court of the land was the

venue for this case. The reason for this lies in the fact that Du County, where the alleged transgression occurred, was located within the capital area. When Du County forwarded the case, because they could not or did not provide a verdict, it fell into the jurisdiction of the commandant of the court on appeal. Still, the fact that the Deir el-Medina case was decided by the village leaders, without even assembling the *kenbet* (local court), shows that matters such as adultery in Egypt were subject to mediation and community enforcement and not criminal legal proceedings. In the Chinese supreme court, the adulterous crime was not only treated as a case of illicit intercourse, but was elevated to the status of filial impiety (*buxiao*), which was a major crime, classed in the category of malicious harm (*zei*). Thus, it became a cause for imperial intervention, since it represented an assault on patriarchy and hierarchy and undermined the very moral foundations of the state. In Egypt, to suggest that two villagers engaged in consensual illicit sex could undermine the moral foundations of the pharaonic state would be ridiculous. The case also reinforces the procedural element that the couple engaging in illicit intercourse must be apprehended during the act for the charge to be upheld, not denounced and arrested the next morning. For the Chinese legal system, technicalities mattered, and there were proper procedures for everything.

TESTAMENTARY WILLS

This final comparison concerns property division through wills. Thanks to the finds from Zhangjiashan, we can now read the Han statute that supposedly regulated the creation, registration, and enforcement of wills, referred to as a “written contract tally of directives prior [to decease]” (*xianling quanshu*):

When an ordinary person wishes to make a will, dividing his agricultural fields, homestead, male and female slaves, and valuable items, the bailiff of the district is to listen personally to his directives and, in every case, is to write it up in a tripartite contract tally and immediately report it up [to the county court], just as with the household registers. When there is one who disputes [the will], carry out matters according to the written contract tally. If there is no written contract tally, do not listen to it (viz., the dispute). As for the agricultural fields and homesteads that have been divided, they are not to [automatically] constitute households. If [the persons] are entitled to have one, then, when the eighth month arrives, inscribe the household [register]. For causing obstructions or difficulties for a will, so that a written contract tally is not made for it: fine one *liang* of gold.⁵²

The reason for constructing such a will in early China is straightforward. Under the Han laws of inheritance, the eldest son of the current principal wife shall become the “heir to the household” (*hu hou*) of his father, receiving his property and its tax and labor service obligations. If a father (or widow) wanted to make a different distribution of property, such as an equal division among sons (or unmarried daughters), so that they each had enough property to form a viable household, that could be dictated to local authorities, written up in a will, and registered with the county court. They might also want to include someone in the inheritance who had disavowed the family years earlier (as we shall see in the will of Zhu Ling and the Old Woman), or intentionally

exclude someone they felt was unfilial. It is unknown, but doubtful, that a father could exclude his eldest son from inheriting the head of household status, since that would violate the statutes. One also observes that the will was dictated to district officials and recorded on a triplicate document, probably with one copy kept by the family, one by district officials, and one by the county court. After the individual died, this officially certified document was to be the basis for property division. No court would listen to a dispute over the property if there were no recorded will.

The earliest known testamentary document uncovered in China was written in 5 and 6 CE, in relatively unskilled handwriting, on sixteen bamboo slips and placed inside the coffin of a woman (fig. 4.4).⁵³ It instructs local officials to carry out a distribution of property among the surviving members of a very complex family:

In the afternoon, on the *xinchou* day of the ninth month, whose first day falls on the *renchen* day, of the fifth year of the Yuanshi reign period (October 31, 5 CE), Zhu Ling, who is registered in Gaodu Village, but who currently resides in a mourning hut in Xin'an Village, is extremely close to death. Therefore, he requests the county court, the three venerables of the district, the scribal assistant of the salaried official of the metropolitan district, the village master, Tian Tan, and others to make and execute this will.

Zhu Ling himself says, "There were three fathers as well as six sons and daughters of different fathers. I want to allow each of them to know of his or her father and his or her place within the household. The sons and daughters are Yijun, Zizhen (i.e., Zhu Ling himself), Zifang, and Xianjun, whose father was Zhu Sun; my younger brother Gongwen, whose father was Shuai Jinjun of Wu; and my younger sister Ruojun, whose father was Bing Changshi of Qu'a. The will is clear; its provisions can be followed."

The Old Woman (i.e., the mother of Zhu Ling) says, "At age fifteen *sui*, Gongwen left home, and emerged voluntarily under his own surname. He thus resided outside [the family] and never sent back a single cash to support us. I personally gave land to Zizhen (Zhu Ling) and Zifang. The aforesaid daughters Xianjun and Ruojun are poor and lack property. On the tenth day of the fourth month of the fifth year [of the Yuanshi reign period] (May 7, 5 CE), I took one field of rice and two fields of mulberry trees and gave them to Ruojun, and I took one field of paddy and gave it to Xianjun until the twelfth month (January 19–February 16, 6 CE). Gongwen injured a person and was made a convict-laborer, and is poor and lacks property.

On the eleventh day of the twelfth month [of the Yuanshi reign period] (January 29, 6 CE), Xianjun and Ruojun are each to return these fields to me, and I will cede them to Gongwen. When I receive the fields, I will take two fields of rice and two fields of mulberry and give them to Gongwen. The boundaries of the fields are to remain as they were before, and Gongwen may not transfer [into another person's name] or sell the fields to anyone else."

The currently serving officials and witnesses are the village master and [head of the] group of five, Tan, and others, and the relatives Kong Ju, Tian Wen, and Man Zhen.

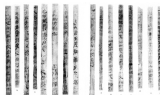


Figure 4.4. “Will of Zhu Ling and the Old Woman,” Western Han period, dated 5–6 CE. Ink on bamboo, clerical script, from tomb no. 101, Xupu Commune, Yizheng County, Jiangsu, China. After Yangzhou Bowuguan, ed., “Jiangsu Yizheng xupu,” [plates 1–2](#).

The bamboo slips were initially viewed as a single document, but recent scholarship has reordered one of the slips, leading to the conclusion that it was a combined copy of two related documents, written on different dates.⁵⁴ The first portion is a will declaring patrimony for a number of children. The second is a later alteration to the initial property division based on changed circumstances.

The terms of the will apparently were dictated at first by the dying Zhu Ling, but the later provisions appear to have been dictated by Zhu Ling’s mother, referred to as “the Old Woman,” a lady who apparently had six children by three successive husbands. Though Zhu Ling was legally the head of household, being the eldest son by the Old Woman’s first husband, it really appears that this matriarch was calling the shots. The greatest concern expressed in the revised document was for the half-brother of Zhu Ling, the prodigal son Gongwen, who had left the family years earlier to strike out on his own, but who had broken the law by wounding a man, and been punished with penal servitude and was now penniless. Though his half-brother and mother are generous to provide him with property, which had formerly been under the management of his half-sisters, they are still wary of his behavior, as they stipulate that he cannot sell or transfer the family land. The fact that the will was buried in the Old Woman’s tomb is most curious.⁵⁵ It suggests that the matriarch (or one of her family members) wished to have underworld authorities enforce the will and its revisions, not just the above-ground authorities.

Finds of actual wills from Egypt are also quite rare. As in China, written and witnessed wills would not really be necessary for a simple family, because traditional rules or laws of inheritance would ensure the proper transfer of wealth and property. The laws from Zhangjiashan specifically state that a will was not mandatory, but based on a personal desire of the individual. Therefore, the lack of wills in the archaeological record probably reflects the fact that wills were not commonly made.

One of the few surviving wills from ancient Egypt records the property division dictated by another assertive matriarch, who also had multiple husbands, and had eight children, all from the second marriage. Her name was Naunakhte (Thebes is Victorious), and she lived in the workman’s village of Deir el-Medina. Based on dated documents related to her first husband, she must have been quite old at the time of the will. Here is a slightly abridged translation of the will, recorded in beautiful handwriting on a papyrus scroll ([fig. 4.5](#)):

reign Ramesses V ... [titulary omitted from translation]

This day, the lady Naunakhte made a record of her property before the following court (*kenbet*):

The chief workman Nakhtemmut, the draughtsman Pentawaret, the foreman Inherkhau, the workman Userhat, the scribe Amennakht of the royal tomb, the workman Nebnefer, the scribe Hersher, the workman Amenpahapy, the draughtsman Amenhotep, the district officer Amennakht, the workman Ti'enramenti, the district officer Ramose, the workman Ta, the workman Nebnefer, son of Khonsu.

She said: As for me, I am a free woman of the land of pharaoh.

I raised these eight servants of yours, and I outfitted them with everything that is usual for people of their character. Now look, I am become old, and look, they do not care for me. As for those who put their hands in my hand (i.e., who helped me), to them I will give my property; [but] as for those who gave me nothing, to them I will not give of my property.

List of the men and women to whom she gave:

The workman Ma'anakhteef,

the workman Qenherkhepeshef. She said, "I will give him a bronze washing-bowl as a bonus over and above his fellows, [worth] 10 sacks of emmer."

the workman Amennakht,

the lady Wasetnakht,

the lady Menetnakht. As for the lady Menetnakht, she said regarding her, "She will share in the division of all my property, except for the *oipe* of emmer that my three male children and the lady Wasetnakht gave me or my *hin* of oil that they gave to me in the same fashion."

List of her children of whom she said, "They will not share in the division of my one-third but only in the two-thirds [share] of their father."

the workman Neferhotep,

the lady Menetnakht,

the lady Henutsenu,

the lady Khatanebu.

As for these four children of mine, they will not share in the division of any of my property. Now as for all the property of the scribe Qenherkhepeshef, my [first] husband and also his immovable property and the storehouse of my father, and also this *oipe* of emmer that I collected with my husband, they will not share in them.

But these eight children of mine will share in the division of the property of their father on equal terms.

And as for my cauldron which I gave him to purchase bread for himself and the *ha* tool of seven *debens* and the *irr*-vase of seven *debens* and the pick of six *debens*, that is forty *debens* [in all], they shall serve him as a portion. He shall not participate in any further copper it shall belong to his brothers [and sisters].

Written by Amennakht, the scribe of the royal tomb of forbidden entry.⁵⁶



A few points are worth noting in regard to Naunakhte’s will. Like Zhu Ling’s will from China, and his mother’s revision, this Egyptian will was initially made as an oral declaration before local officials, in this case a court (*kenbet*) consisting of the foremen of the work crew, and other leading workers in the village, totaling fourteen men in all. They would serve as witnesses, and the chief scribe among them would write it down. Thus, in both legal traditions, it was the oral declaration that carried the intention of the dying individual and gave the will its legal validity.⁵⁷ The written form was only recorded as proof of this and to verify the memory of witnesses regarding the oral declaration.

The exact find spot of the will is unclear (thought to be found at or stolen from the excavation in 1928), though recent scholarship has reconstructed that it belonged to a personal library at Deir el-Medina, originally owned by the scribe Qenherkhepeshef (see [chapter 5](#)), the first husband of Naunakhte, and kept in the family for over a century.⁵⁸ This would make sense, since the family would have wanted to maintain a copy of this legal document to justify any claims on the mother’s property.

Scholars have determined that a married woman in ancient Egypt could own property separate from that of her husband and could buy, lend, or dispose of it on her own, independent of the husband.⁵⁹ Some of Naunakhte’s property, including the private library, would have come from her deceased first husband. Furthermore, a husband was required to maintain his wife, and she was entitled upon dissolution of the marriage to one-third of his property, both that of which he had before the marriage and that of which they acquired during the marriage. So, in the will, Naunakhte decides to cut off those children of her second marriage who have not supported her in her old age, but she can only cut them off from receiving property from her one-third share of the marital property of her new marriage or any of the property of her first marriage. She cannot disinherit them from a portion of their father’s (her second husband’s) two-thirds share. She is also careful to declare herself a “free woman” (*nmḥ.yt*) and a “female citizen of the town” (*‘nh-nw-njw.t*), which means that she was not a slave or servant and thus had full property rights.

Conclusion

In terms of parallels among the legal principles that underpinned each judicial system, there is similar royal rhetoric in both China and Egypt that promoted the image of a divine or divinely ordained ruler who maintained order in the cosmos by suppressing the forces of chaos and lawlessness and brought justice to the people. The same type of rhetoric was also common in other archaic states such as in Mesopotamia, where Hammurabi of Babylon (c. 1810–1750 BCE) declared himself the divinely chosen “shepherd who brings peace” and “king of justice” who protected his flock, including the poor and the weak, from disorder and injustice.⁶⁰ Thus, we can conclude that this feature was a structural similarity in the legal rhetoric of archaic states.

In terms of how criminal matters were classified, we also saw a marked similarity in the Egyptian and Chinese cases of viewing crimes that infringed on royal tombs or temples as sacrilege, rather than as simple theft, for which the perpetrators were sentenced with the harshest penalties, such as being impaled on a stick or having one's entire clan exterminated. This should be seen as a structural similarity as well, for early monarchies always associated the ruler with the gods as a tool of legitimation. Thus, any infringement on the person or property of the ruler was treated as an affront to the gods and treated as a heinous crime.

At the more practical level of judicial procedure, courts and investigators in ancient Egypt and early China both engaged in the practice of judicial torture to bring out the facts of a case and to illicit a confession from the accused. It appears that a conviction in both systems could not be achieved without a confession, despite the presence of overwhelming physical evidence and witnesses. This can also be considered a structural similarity, closely related to the previous two just mentioned. Only agents of the state could use torture in judicial proceedings or commit violence as a punishment. Moreover, a confession is an acknowledgment of one's guilt and powerlessness before an absolute ruler who had an absolute monopoly on sanctioned violence.

Although one can obtain a greater general understanding of the nature and function of archaic state-level societies through an examination of such structural similarities, it is through identifying differences in legal principles and how they were applied that one can obtain a greater understanding of the "flavor" of each civilization.

First, even though one can observe a few surviving archaic elements in Chinese law of the Qin period, it was nearly devoid of any role for the gods, such as that seen in Egyptian legal practice, where every statement in court was accompanied by an oath in the name of a god or the ruler, and gods could decide legal cases through oracles that bypassed the court system.

However, the major difference between the two systems was that the Chinese state was far more *proactive* in preventing and seeking out crime, with its enormous body of written laws and its extensive infrastructure of policing and investigation. In Egypt, the legal system was more *reactive*, where injured parties needed to bring a complaint to the authorities to initiate legal action. In addition, the Egyptian system left far more room for community mediation. The fact that local courts in Egypt were composed of leading village members allowed them to resolve most issues locally, without resort to state-sanctioned violence. In China, on the other hand, the written sources that survive portray a very intrusive and monolithic state apparatus, which replaced community mediation with state-controlled legal decisions in matters great and small. Those activities classified in Chinese law as "crimes," such as petty theft, rape, and adultery, were viewed as affronts to the universal order guaranteed by the emperor. They were not viewed as crimes in Egypt, and could be resolved through material restitution and oaths promising reformed behavior. The origins of the more intrusive Chinese state apparatus will be explored in the epilogue.

Scribal Culture in Life and Death

The central role of writing and the importance of a scribal bureaucratic class of officials were defining characteristics in the formation and continuity of both early Chinese and ancient Egyptian civilization. Sinologists and Egyptologists have traditionally viewed the state and its literate culture as the work of great rulers, statesmen, generals, or sages who constructed a comprehensive ideological system to which bureaucrats, peasants, artisans, and all other classes were either enticed or coerced into adherence. Though such great individuals undoubtedly did play a central role in the construction of the state and its culture, the previously overlooked class of scribes exerted a crucial transformative and stabilizing influence. The officially trained scribe played a pivotal role in the administration of early empires in both China and Egypt. Through his functions of resource extraction and labor management, communication, legal process, and detailed accounting, the scribe ensured the day-to-day operations of the state and its financial stability.¹ It is not often realized, however, that through his copying and embellishment of school texts and ancient literature, the scribe helped transmit and even generate the literate culture of each civilization.

To be a scribe in ancient Egypt or early China was to lay claim to a special distinction, at least in the mind of the scribe himself, and occasionally in the view of others in society as well.² Egyptian elites, generals, and viziers sometimes depicted themselves in stone funerary statuary in the guise of a scribe, or added scribal titles to their own as an assertion of cultural knowledge and the power of literacy.³ In China, the scribe was viewed as the lowest level of intellectual, meaning those who labored with their minds rather than with their hands, and residing anywhere in this upper stratum of society opened the door to tremendous social mobility.⁴ In real terms, the scribe in Egypt and China possessed the power of literacy, mastered by very few others. This skill

gave some scribes tangible power, not just over the content of administrative and literary texts, but a terrifying power over persons, as they orchestrated the legal process seen in the previous chapter, constructing cases against both the mighty and the lowly through torture, interrogation, and the manipulation of written testimony. With his brush, the scribe truly wielded a power far above his status or wealth.

The scribal community in both ancient Egypt and early China created a cultural system of tools, materials, images, and texts that represented their profession's group identity, emphasized its importance, and perpetuated its existence. This scribal culture was displayed in both the mortal realm, as seen in the biographies and work documents of known official scribes, and in the afterlife, as displayed in the tombs of scribes from both cultures.

Scribal Material Culture

All culture is rooted in the material world. The hair-brushes and rush-pens, writing palettes, ink-cakes and ink-stones, papyrus rolls, and bamboo-slip scrolls were not just the simple tools of scribes; they also became potent cultural symbols of their occupation and a locus of elaboration for status-marking and competition that was even projected into the afterlife realm. The materiality of writing implements and writing materials influenced scribal culture in nonmaterial ways as well, shaping the physical posture, patterns of movement, dress, and adornment of the man as well as the styles of script, textual layout, and transmission of his text.

For the Egyptian scribe working from the Old Kingdom (ca. 2670–2168 BCE) to the end of the Ptolemaic period (304–30 BCE), the standard writing implement was a pen (*ʿr*) made of the stalk of a marsh rush, around twenty centimeters long and 1.5 to 2.5 millimeters in diameter (figs. 5.1b, 5.1d). The end of the rush would be cut diagonally and slightly chewed by the scribe to feather it. The pen had no significant reservoir for ink and had to be rewetted quite often. A large supply of pens could be stored in pen cases, like those seen in figures 5.1a and 5.1c. Separate pens were used for black and red inks, so as not to cross-contaminate the pigments. While the scribe often kept an extra pen at the ready behind his ear, more pens were conveniently stored in a chambered groove carved into special palettes (*gstj*) (fig. 5.1e), usually made of wood (twenty to forty-three centimeters long), which also carried two cavities for red and black ink-cakes. These palettes could be fitted with a cord and slung over the shoulder. The pen case and palette (along with a bag for pigments) became the main symbols of the scribal profession in Egypt and formed the logogram in hieroglyphic script to write the word for both “scribe” (*zš*) and “to write” (*zš*).⁵

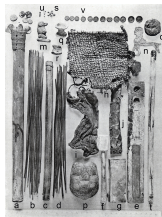


Figure 5.1. Writing kit of Djehuty, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1550–1479 BCE). Tomb CC 37, Hall C, Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. (a, b) Palm column-shaped rush-pen case with 26 reeds (JE 43174); (c, d) cylindrical rush-pen case with 15 reeds (JE 43176); (e) wooden scribal palette (JE 43173); (f) wooden papyrus burnisher (JE 95566); (g) coated wooden writing board, (h) bag of woven string, (i) small linen bag, (j) leather roll (JE 43175); (k) linen roll (not shown), (l) papyrus fragments (not shown), (m) Thoth figurine (JE 43175 bis?); (n) copper sphinx (JE 43195); (o) round piece of wax, (p) tortoise shell (Agricultural Museum of Cairo, JE 341, former Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 43185); (q) clay cup (JE 43821?); (r) model knuckle of clay, (s) resinous material, (t) wooden scale crossbar, (u) amulet in green faience, (v) weights of varying sizes. From Carnarvon et al., *Five Years' Explorations*, plate LXVI.

In contrast to the rush pen of the Egyptian scribe, his Chinese counterpart wielded a brush (*bi*), usually fashioned from a bamboo tube (twenty-one to twenty-five centimeters in length, four to six millimeters in diameter), with a nib of hair (2.0 to 4.1 centimeters long) inserted at one end. Usually there was a stiff core of jackrabbit or deer hair, surrounded by a softer outer layer of goat hair, to provide both strength and suppleness. The other end of the brush was often sharpened to a point to facilitate pinning in the hair behind the ear (just as in Egypt). To protect the hair brush, the Chinese scribe stored one or two of them in a sheath or brush-case (*guan*; [figs. 5.5h, 5.6g](#)).⁶

In both Egypt and China, the primary pigment for black writing was provided by solid pellets or cakes of lampblack, mixed with animal or plant glue and other additives. It has been shown that Chinese ink (*mo*) was made from the soot of pine wood or pine oil.⁷ Egyptian black ink (*ry.t km*) was probably made from the soot of cooking vessels, and red ink (*ry.t dšr.t*) from red ochre.⁸ For scribes of both cultures, these chunks of ink were usually stored in a little bag ([fig. 5.1i](#)).⁹ While Egyptian ink pellets never became more elaborate over time, Chinese ink-cakes became a locus for embellishment through carving or inscriptions as early as the Han period. This development accelerated in later centuries until ink-cakes were an entire category of artistic expression, commercial promotion, and connoisseurly interest. The same could be said of the glossy, dark ink-stone (*yan*) upon which the Chinese scribe ground his ink and mixed it with water ([fig. 5.2.1](#)). When the Chinese ink was still mostly in small pellet form, the scribe also needed a pestle (*yanzi*; [fig. 5.2.2](#)) to crush the ink. During the Han period, the ink-stones might sport elaborately carved covers or be stored in decorated cases made of bronze or lacquered wood ([fig. 5.6d](#)), which allowed high-status scribes or other elites to use the material language of scribal equipment while still competitively projecting their higher position.¹⁰ As with the ink-cakes, this trend of decorating ink-stones only accelerated in later imperial times as literary scholars became ever more identified with the material tools of writing.¹¹

Wooden boards (*du, ban, fang*) and bamboo or wooden slips (*die, jian, zha*)

were the principal writing materials in China from the Bronze Age until the second century CE, when they were gradually supplanted by paper. The wooden boards could be cut to various sizes, but the most common was about twenty-three centimeters long and about five to nine centimeters wide. Bamboo slips were made by cutting the bamboo stalk into segments, scraping off the green cuticle, and drying them. In the early imperial period, wooden boards were used for accounts, registers, correspondence, and other documents which could be reasonably contained on a single piece of wood, laid out in multiple columns. Bamboo slips (three to fourteen millimeters wide) were used for longer documents, treatises, or legal cases, being bound together with multiple strings and rolled into documents or “booklets” (*ce*), with writing commencing from the rightmost slip, and stored and counted as “bundles” (*pian*). Slips were made in different lengths depending on the genre of document. For example, imperial decrees and laws were written on slips of about 67.5 centimeters in length, but the most common length for document slips was twenty-three to twenty-eight centimeters. Some deluxe documents (plate 6b) were written on rolls of plain silk (*bo*), as were illustrations like maps and diagrams.¹²

The principal writing material for the Egyptian scribe was sheets and scrolls made from the papyrus plant that grew along the Nile, especially in the Delta. After removing the rind, long strips were cut from the spongy pith of the triangular stem, laid out in two perpendicular layers and pounded together until they fused into a single sheet (forty-two to forty-seven centimeters tall, sixteen to forty-two centimeters wide). After drying and smoothing, these sheets could be glued together to form rolls (*ʿr.t*) of twenty sheets or longer. In practice, a manufactured roll was cut down into half and quarter-height sizes. For temporary texts that could later be erased or transferred to papyrus, the scribe used a coated sycamore writing board (*ʿny*). Ostraca of limestone or shards of pottery were also used as writing materials, especially around the village of Deir el-Medina where limestone flakes abounded, some as a by-product of royal tomb excavation.¹³

Whereas the Egyptian scribe could remove mistakes on papyrus by moistening it with his tongue or dabbing away graphs with a rag, the Chinese scribe working with bamboo or wood used a special metal scraper (*xue*) or “book knife” (*shudao*; figs. 5.5c, 5.6c).¹⁴ As seen in figurines and relief depictions, these knives were usually hung at the waist near the scribe’s seal of office. Some surviving examples carry beautiful gold-inlaid patterns and inscriptions. During the Western Han period, low-level bureaucratic scribes, especially legal scribes, were condescendingly referenced by the shorthand, “knife and brush officials” (*daobi li*), recalling not just the two major tools of their profession, but also the power of both tools to slash and stab at their targets of prosecution.¹⁵ When paper was introduced in the second and third centuries CE, the book knife became superfluous and disappeared from scribal culture.

For practical purposes, the writing implements and materials of the Egyptian and Chinese scribes were gathered into portable kits, which are sometimes found as assemblages in burials. The most extensive scribal kit ever excavated in Egypt was found in 1911 in an early Eighteenth Dynasty multifamily tomb (Asasif tomb CC 37), containing the coffins of the scribe Djehuty (*dḥw.tj*) and his wife. In the tomb, the oval rush basket containing the

scribal tools was found in close proximity to the coffin of Djehuty.¹⁶ The basket held a wide range of objects associated with writing and accountancy, and scholars consider it to be a nearly complete ensemble for a scribe. It was probably used by the deceased in life, then ritually prepared for burial, being doused with pitch (fig. 5.1). It held two different cases for rush pens, including a large one in the form of a palm column (a), which held twenty-six pens (b), a wooden scribal palette with depressions for red and black ink (e), a tortoise shell that may have held the water that wet the pens (p), pieces of wax and resin that may have been used in ink production, and a linen bag to store ink pellets (i). It also contained a peculiar mallet-shaped tool that was probably used to burnish papyrus smooth before writing (f).¹⁷ The basket originally held a papyrus roll (now fragmentary), and scholars have suggested that the coated wooden block (g) was a small writing board or possibly a model of one.

Some fascinating items in this kit suggest accountancy functions, such as the graduated weights and crossbar for a scale (v, t). Others suggest the ritual life of a scribe, such as the little baboon—the sacred animal of Thoth, patron god of scribes (m)—and a small clay cup that may have been used to present offerings to the figurine (q). A small amulet of a mummy (u) and a sphinx of beaten copper (n) are also highly suggestive of ritual implements used by the scribe. The balance scale might have served a second symbolic purpose, representing the weighing of the heart at the final judgment, at which Thoth was the divine scribe who recorded the outcome.¹⁸

The most complete writing kit ever found from early China held remarkably similar contents to Djehuty's kit. It was discovered in 1975 in the tomb of an official named Sui, in Fenghuangshan tomb number 168, at Jingzhou, Hubei.¹⁹ The kit (fig. 5.2) was placed in a small rectangular bamboo basket in the side storage chamber of the deep, wooden-chambered shaft tomb, dated 167 BCE. The funerary inventory found in the tomb records the basket as “one lidded basket for calculation” (*jisi yi he*), and indeed the basket contained a nearly complete balance scale, with inscribed crossbar, metal balance-weight, wood and bamboo counting rods and tallies, and over one hundred bronze coins. Within the same basket, archaeologists found a writing brush with decorated case (fig. 5.2.17), an ink-stone and pestle set (figs. 5.2.1, 5.2.2), melon-seed-shaped pellets of black ink (fig. 5.2.21), along with several blank wooden boards for writing (figs. 5.2.11–16), and a bronze scraper to erase graphs (fig. 5.2.18). Near the basket, archaeologists found a low desk, before which Sui could kneel down and place his completed documents. Just as in Egypt, the scribal official in China was equally involved with working with weights, measures, and numbers, as he was with genres of text. Funerary texts from Sui's tomb clearly indicate that he expected to report to a supervisor in the underworld and continue whatever official position he held in the mortal world, possibly something to do with taxation or government accounts, so he brought his writing tools with him.²⁰

The nature of these writing implements and materials, in conjunction with other cultural patterns and constraints, strongly determined forms of movement and handling associated with writing. In Egypt, the scribe writing on papyrus is most commonly depicted shirtless, squatting or seated cross-legged with a section of the papyrus laid upon his lap, supported by his stretched-out kilt. When using a writing board rather than papyrus roll, Egyptian scribes are

depicted in a similar seated posture or occasionally as standing, with a smaller writing board held in the left hand. In the granary model from the Middle Kingdom tomb of Meketre ([plate 9](#)), we see scribes with both types of writing material. Sometimes, higher-status scribes are depicted seated on stools with the writing board angled on a box in front of them.²¹ The rush pen was held between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, about three to six centimeters from the end, with the wrist held above the writing surface. The left hand usually gripped the scribal palette that held the ink. After every five to six signs, the scribe would dip his pen in a water pot (*pꜣs*), rub the wetted tip in the black or red inkwell, then continue writing. The scribe added “rubrics” in red to indicate item totals or new sections and also penned “verse points” in red at certain points in the text to aid scanning or recitation. The nature of the rush pen made it nearly impossible to draw strokes that went from bottom right to top left, and this influenced the development of ligatures in the cursive hieratic script ([plate 6a](#)).²² While Old Kingdom papyri are typically written in vertical columns, Middle Kingdom scribes slowly transitioned to writing in horizontal lines, with some literary texts containing a mixture of both layouts. Different types of documents often had their own layout conventions. When writing a letter, a scribe would typically begin on one side of the papyrus, then flip the sheet over and continue. Writing boards were used for temporary texts and could be washed clean or resurfaced for reuse. Papyrus scrolls would be rolled and sometimes sealed with clay and put in jars for archival storage, whereas correspondence would typically be folded multiple times, then sealed and addressed on the exterior before dispatching.

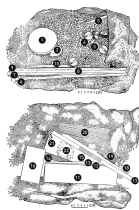


Figure 5.2. Writing kit of Sui, Western Han period, 167 BCE. Tomb no. 168, Fenghuangshan, Jingzhou City, Hubei, China. (1) Inkstone, sandstone (dia. 9.5 cm, thickness 1.6 cm); (2) pestle, quartzite river cobble (H 3.5 cm, dia. 3.7–5.0 cm); (3) sixty-two *banliang* bronze coins; (4) balance weight; (5, 6, 7, 9, 10) wooden rods; (8) inscribed wood scale crossbar; (11–16) blank wooden writing boards; (17) writing brush with case; (18) bronze scraper; (19) thirty-nine *banliang* coins; (20) thirty bamboo tallies; (21) ink pellets; (22) grayish-white powder. From Huazhong Shifan Xueyuan and Zhong Zhicheng, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan,” 20–21, figs. 1–2.

Judging by representations in stone carvings, painting, and funerary models, Chinese scribes typically dressed in long robes with generous sleeves. It may seem counterintuitive, but scholars have concluded that the Chinese scribe did not write with his wooden board or bamboo-slip scroll supported by a desk, or even in his lap like the Egyptian scribe. Instead, no matter whether he was kneeling on his mat or standing in attendance, the board or scroll was held aloft in the left hand in front of him, while his right hand held the brush perpendicular to this surface. His elbow and wrist did not contact the surface.

The small desks that are sometimes found in tombs may have been used to hold the tools or support texts for scanning, but they were not used for actual writing, for they were too low to write upon.²³ Based on surviving traces on documents, it appears that despite the greater ink-carrying capacity of his brush compared to the rush pen of the Egyptian scribe, the Chinese scribe dipped his brush after every two to three characters, avoiding the faint signs seen in Egyptian texts when the pen ran dry (plate 6a). The typical Chinese graph in clerical script also had many more strokes than the hieratic signs of Egyptian. Also, since the writing surface of wooden boards and bamboo slips were long and narrow, the Chinese scribe almost invariably wrote in columns. Each bamboo slip, which was typically bound into a scroll, held only one line of text, whereas a wooden board could hold multiple columns of text on the front and back. As in Egypt, official correspondence in early China could be rolled up and sealed (scroll), or covered and sealed (board) to secure the contents from view.

Scribal Training

Becoming a fully certified official scribe in ancient Egypt or early China took many years of informal and formal training, necessitated by the nature of both languages' complex scripts and the range of specialized terminology and document genres that had to be mastered. The cursive hieratic script employed by the Egyptian scribe and the clerical script employed by his Chinese counterpart were more difficult to learn than a syllabary (like Bronze-Age Linear B Greek) or an alphabet (like classical Greek), with their limited number of signs. The Chinese scribe had to master the recitation and writing of more than two thousand different logograms (i.e., one sign representing a single word), each of which usually consisted of separate phonetic and semantic elements (plate 6b). Egyptian hieratic was the cursive form derived from the more detailed monumental hieroglyphic script and was the script normally employed by scribes (plate 6a). Comparable to the Chinese script, the Egyptian scripts wrote words with a combination of logograms, consonantal phonetic complements, and semantic classifiers, but the pen-drawn hieratic script highly simplified some of the more pictographic elements of the hieroglyphs and employed ligatures between elements. Thus, the Egyptian scribe learned to write entire words (or word groups) and did not just learn the elements used to construct them. This lengthy and difficult schooling experience, along with the school texts it employed, became part of the shared culture of scribes and was referenced both in life and in burial.

During the Qin and early Han periods, it appears from legal texts that the scribal profession was a hereditary caste, where only the son of a scribe could enter official scribal schools. This system was unable to train sufficient scribes to staff the mature imperial bureaucracy, so a parallel track was developed where men from nonscribal families could train as assistants (*zuo*) in government offices and help with administrative work.²⁴ In Egypt, no similar law limiting access to becoming a scribe appears to have existed, but in practice the system was mostly hereditary and limited to privileged social groups that had the resources and access to scribal training.²⁵

Scribal training likely began in the home or at the workplace, as the young boy learned basic literacy from his scribal father. We see some evidence at the workmen's huts in the Valley of the Kings that the sons of some workmen were practicing on ostraca under their fathers' tutelage.²⁶ In both cultures, formal training in scribal school usually began in the teen years. The "Statutes on Scribes" from Zhangjiashan tomb number 247 specifies that the sons of Han scribes would begin formal training at seventeen, under the sponsorship of a study mentor (*xue'er*) who was responsible for his conduct and success.²⁷

The scribal student in China was first trained using simple lexical lists and primers like *Bamboo Bundles of Cangjie* (Cangjie pian) or *Bamboo Bundles for Rapid Attainment* (Jijiu pian), which contained lists of words arranged by semantic category.²⁸ The more advanced student probably then progressed to model texts, such as the maxims found in Shuihudi tomb number 11 on how to be a good official.

The Egyptian pupil in a New Kingdom scribal school probably began formal group instruction around age ten. Schools were probably located at the palace, or attached to a temple, treasury, or division of the army, with smaller, regional schools existing in other locales. The student probably began with lexical lists as well as simple texts like the primer *Kemyt* (*kmy.t*), passages of which have been found on hundreds of ostraca in Egypt, attesting to its popularity in education. The instructor might first give the students a model to sight-copy, but later as they became more proficient, he might have them write from dictation. The advanced student was also taught arithmetic at the same time, and would then move on to more complex model letters, scribal propaganda like the *Satire on the Trades*, classical wisdom texts, or literature like *Tale of Sinuhe* (plate 6a). These would have presented a special problem for the New Kingdom scribal student, for whereas the Qin or Han scribe was mostly copying texts that were close to the spoken register of his day, the advanced Egyptian scribe was copying literature that was composed during the Middle Kingdom in a "classical" language that was very different from the current spoken register. Imagine yourself going to school and learning to transcribe Chaucer or even Beowulf soon after learning your ABCs, and you can see the difficulty in this. After a period of about four years of education, a student could choose more advanced training in the administration, priesthood, or army as an apprentice to a working scribe. It could take up to twelve years to achieve proficiency and obtain specialized skills like mathematics or accounting. It was only at this stage that a student might learn the monumental hieroglyphic script. Some who worked at the "foreign office" (see chapter 2) might even be trained to read Babylonian cuneiform.²⁹

According to the "Statutes on Scribes" from Zhangjiashan, Chinese scribal students were tested after three years of study, and would be certified as a scribe if they could recite and write out five thousand consecutive words from the standard primer. They could then be posted in a central government or regional position and hopefully start moving up the bureaucratic ladder.³⁰ This testing system represented the origins of the long-lasting tradition in China of civil service exams, a way of selecting men for government service based on competency rather than birth. We do not know of any similar standardized testing of apprentice scribes in Egypt, but they certainly had to be certified by their teachers before commencing real work.

Biographical Sketches of Two Official Scribes

The two official scribes profiled here, Shi Rao, scribe in the Bureau of Merit of the governor of Donghai Commandery (d. ca. 10 BCE) and Qenherkhepeshef (*kn-hr-hpš=f*), scribe of the royal tomb (d. ca. 1194 BCE) in Egypt, do not appear in official historical records or monumental inscriptions. Rather, we learn of them from discarded documents, graffiti, and funerary articles that give us minute details about their jobs and private lives. And even though neither man really made an impact on the national stage, each brushed shoulders with high government officials and wielded significant power in his local sphere by nature of his position and professional literacy.

Shi Rao served in various scribal positions in Donghai Commandery, located in present-day southern Shandong and northern Jiangsu, one of the more populous provinces in the Han empire, with over 1.5 million persons. Shi Rao was just one of an estimated one hundred thousand literate bureaucrats who served in the regional administration at the end of the Western Han period.³¹ He never reached a high salary-grade before his life was cut short. The highest post he attained only carried a salary-grade of “100 bushels,” which was near the bottom of the Han pay scale. This would have entitled him to about ninety-six liters of grain and eight hundred cash per month, barely enough to support a small family.³² He would have been classed among the “junior officials” (*shaoli*).

Because his family or colleagues later placed a year-long professional diary in his tomb (fig. 5.6f), we know more about the daily activities of Shi Rao during 11 BCE than those of any other individual, including the emperor.³³ We do not know in what post he was serving at the start of the year, but we know that he was a busy man. Many of the entries in the diary give short notations of where he stayed for the night, and these indicate that he was often traveling on official business and staying in official lodges, courier stations, police stations, or occasionally, private homes. He notes when he was sick or resting at home, when he was beset by bad weather while traveling, and who came to visit him during trips.

On August 24, 11 BCE, Shi Rao began a new job serving in the Legal Bureau (Fa Cao) of Donghai.³⁴ This position apparently brought more excitement to his career, for we see in his diary for November 2 that he was traveling through Xiangfei County “in pursuit of bandits.”³⁵ On November 25, Shi Rao assumed significantly more responsibility as he became scribe in the Bureau of Merit (Gong Cao) of the governor of Donghai.³⁶

This important scribal position involved recording and assessing the competency and achievements of the province’s bureaucrats and probably also recommending them to the governor for promotion. Though he was poorly paid and overworked, Shi Rao would have been an important man to know (and to ingratiate oneself to) in Donghai, especially for officials seeking a promotion. Shi Rao sometimes traveled in personal attendance upon the governor. For example, on November 9, he followed him to a local mountain famous for its hot springs (maybe to seek healing for the governor).³⁷ Thus, it could be said that a scribe in the Bureau of Merit was considered a personal advisor to the governor.³⁸

Shi Rao’s tomb (fig. 5.6) contained many drafts and document copies from

his office in the Bureau of Merit, including a draft census for the whole province, summaries of the number of officials in different administrative units, relocation and promotion notices for specific officials, and a list of which officials were absent from their posts. Many of these documents may have been related to the annual “forwarding of accounts” (*shangji*), which was a herculean task conducted each year to tabulate all the people and resources of the empire. Several of these reports were probably written by Shi Rao himself and indicate his skill at meticulous writing and calculation (except for a few errors). But Shi Rao was not just a technocrat, for the texts included in or inventoried for his tomb indicate that he also had an interest in poetry, didactic literature, imperial decrees, philosophy, and divination. Like many scribes, he presented himself as a jack-of-all-trades.³⁹

In his diary for January 6, 10 BCE, Shi Rao cryptically recorded that “the lord has met with misfortune,” which probably indicated the death of his superior, the governor.⁴⁰ Shi Rao appears to have subsequently traveled to notify officials in neighboring provinces before the death was publicly announced on January 19.⁴¹ Apparently, sometime shortly after his diary for this lunar year closed, Shi Rao himself became gravely ill, for wooden “greeting tablets” from his tomb record several visits from colleagues, students, and emissaries from senior officials, all inquiring about his health.⁴² He probably died sometime during 10 BCE and was interred in a joint burial with his wife.

More than a thousand years earlier in Egypt, under the pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty, Qenherkhepeshef served in the position of scribe of the royal tomb (*zš-n-p3-ḥr*), also referred to in hieroglyphic inscriptions as “scribe in the place of truth” (*zš-n-st-m3ꜥ.t*). Living in the workman’s village of Deir el-Medina ([map 1.1](#)), situated near the Valley of the Kings across from present-day Luxor, Egypt, he was probably born between 1264 and 1259 BCE, under the reign of Ramesses II (r. ca. 1290–1224 BCE).⁴³ Qenherkhepeshef probably came to Deir el-Medina as a young boy to apprentice under the presiding scribe of the royal tomb, Ramose, who because of childlessness, adopted Qenherkhepeshef and selected him to continue his official position.⁴⁴

Records indicate that by 1239 BCE, Qenherkhepeshef was himself serving as scribe of the royal tomb and would continue in that position for more than four decades.⁴⁵ The job, which was technically a direct appointment by the pharaoh’s vizier, entailed significant responsibilities. The scribe was required to handle all administrative aspects of the construction of the pharaoh’s tomb. He maintained written records of the amount of work completed, rosters of workers (with notations of absences), and their paid rations. He was also in charge of the workers’ valuable metal tools (which were state property), and had to requisition items from royal storehouses for the project.⁴⁶ Moreover, he served on the local court (*kenbet*, see [chapter 4](#)). His compensation was in-kind (since Egypt had no currency), including rations of beer, bread, fish, vegetables, water, and firewood. He was paid less than the foremen of the tomb crew, but more than the average worker.⁴⁷ Though his status and pay were not very high in relation to other officials, he corresponded regularly with the vizier and probably met him in person on inspection tours. Just as Shi Rao utilized his connection with the governor of Donghai and established a network with administrators in neighboring provinces, Qenherkhepeshef could use his position to enhance his network of influence.

Though he was technically a laborer on the tomb and lived among the other workers, he took advantage of the benefits of his position to live as comfortably as possible. His house in town was one of the more spacious.⁴⁸ He arrogated the largest lodging at the halfway camp on the path into the valley for himself and reserved a shady niche (marked with his name) at the entrance to the tomb (KV8) of the pharaoh Merneptah (r. ca. 1224–1214 BCE), where he could conduct his business.⁴⁹ We also have several accounts of his exploiting the labor of the work crew for his own personal projects, with one draftsman complaining, “For you I am like a donkey. If there is work to do, bring the donkey!”⁵⁰ He was also repeatedly accused of taking bribes to cover up the misdeeds of other men.⁵¹

He appears to have been childless in his personal life, the same cruel fate that befell his predecessor. He was married for the last time in his fifties to a girl of twelve or thirteen named Naunakhte (see her will in [chapter 4](#)). They were together until his death around 1194 BCE, but they had no children. According to her will, she had eight children by her next husband. Perhaps, because of his childlessness, he appears to have been very concerned with perpetuating his name by recording it on monuments and graffiti. In addition to several stelae and altars he commissioned, he carved his name on 239 graffiti in the valley, far more than any other individual.⁵² Egyptologists can instantly recognize his handwriting, which is idiosyncratic to the point of illegibility, unlike Shi Rao’s neat, legible script.

As an official scribe, Qenherkhepeshef was enmeshed in a world of writing, and he extended this worldview beyond his day-to-day responsibilities. He possessed a fairly extensive private library, which he may have partially inherited from his predecessor, Ramose. To this he added several more texts of his own, before the whole collection was bequeathed to his young widow, whose descendants kept it in the family for several more generations.⁵³ The library eventually included literary stories, love poems, copies of royal inscriptions, wisdom texts, model letters, hymns, invocations, spells, charms, and books on divination and medicine. Many of these texts were either collected, copied, or composed by Qenherkhepeshef, and, judging from their variety, we can observe that he had eclectic interests, much like Shi Rao with his collection of literary, didactic, and divination texts.

Qenherkhepeshef appears to have been particularly interested in history and royal ideology. His library contained two partial copies in his own hand of Ramesses II’s account of his Battle of Kadesh against the Hittites.⁵⁴ He also compiled lists of Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs (omitting Hatshepsut and Akhenaten, of course) and another list of princes of Ramesses II.⁵⁵ At one point, he commissioned an expensive stone offering table, depicting himself worshipping the name-cartouches of thirty-four former kings and queens, some of whom would have been rather obscure by his day.⁵⁶ He may have copied the king-lists and the Kadesh account for his own edification or as school texts to instruct students, but the altar was probably commissioned to enlist divine assistance from the pharaohs in benefitting him personally.⁵⁷ Qenherkhepeshef also used his literacy to access the spiritual world in other ways. He wrote elaborate charms to be worn around the neck to repel the headache-causing demon *Sehaqeq* (*shꜥkꜥk*) and kept a fascinating book of dream interpretation and divination.⁵⁸ As a master of the written Egyptian forms of hieroglyphic and

hieratic, Qenherkhepeshef also compiled lexicographic lists of words arranged by semantic classifier, lists of official titles, and even developed his own cryptographic hieroglyphic spellings to flaunt his mastery of the script.⁵⁹

Thus, we can see that Qenherkhepeshef not only used his hard-earned literacy to perform the difficult functions of his job, but also to enrich himself through petty corruption, to study the writing system, to seek divine help and spiritual protection, and to transmit the ideology and cultural memory of Egyptian kingship. He was aware of his own special status, and he made great efforts to project that toward the world around him.

Scribal “Class Consciousness”

Official scribes like Shi Rao and Qenherkhepeshef were told by their teachers that they belonged to a special group, blessed with a superior profession than that of any manual laborer or soldier. They learned their profession’s unique advantages by dutifully copying school texts like the Egyptian *Satire on the Trades*, a composition that originally dated from the Middle Kingdom and which exalted the career of the scribe and lampooned the miseries of the farmer, the fisherman, the courier, and the craftsman:

Behold, there is nothing that surpasses writings! They are like a boat upon the water. Read then at the end of [the *Book of*] *Kemyt* and you will find this statement in it saying: “As for a scribe in any office in the [Royal] Residence, he will not suffer want in it.” (II)

[Unlike the scribe], I do not see the stoneworker on an [important] errand or a goldsmith in a place to which he has been sent, but I have seen the coppersmith at his work at the mouth of the furnace. His fingers were like the claws of the crocodile, and he stank more than fish eggs. (IV)⁶⁰

Chinese scribes also practiced copying primers that exalted their own profession, like those found in the recovered fragments of the Han recension of the late third-century BCE primer *Bamboo Bundles of Cangjie*.

Cangjie invented writing, to teach later descendants. Young lad, receive the recitation [instruction]. Be prudent, respectful, and cautious. Take effort to read silently and chant aloud. Work without ceasing, day and night. Make sure you become a scribe, to calculate accounts and to manage affairs. You will excel beyond others.⁶¹

Although Chinese scribes thought highly of themselves, and many in society admired them as well, more classically trained scholars continued to disparage them as mere “scribal craftsmen” (*shijiang*). The Eastern Han scholar Wang Chong (ca. 27–ca. 100 CE) remarked, “Those knowing how to hew and shape beams and pillars go by the name of ‘wood craftsmen,’ those who dig holes and ditches are called ‘dirt craftsmen,’ and those who understand how to ‘carve’ and ‘polish’ official documents are called ‘scribal craftsmen.’”⁶²

The evidence from their own hands, however, proves that official scribes in China and Egypt were not merely copyists or transmitters of cultural heritage. There is growing evidence that they used their literacy to embellish the

language of texts, approaching the territory we would start to call authorship. The legal scribes who compiled *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases* collection (see [chapter 4](#)), embellished some of the genuine legal cases to make the scribes within them appear as heroes. They actually changed the outcome of one case by adding a new manuscript section. A few cases in the collection are completely fictional stories, contemporary compositions anachronistically set in more ancient times. These scribes were not just transmitting a collection of legal cases, but rather, through their editing, they were composing in the genre of legal literature. They had become anonymous *composers*, though not yet named *authors*.⁶³

Even the so-called wisdom literature of ancient Egypt and some of the most venerated Confucian Classics may have been composed by official scribes. It is entirely plausible that most of the texts of the genre of wisdom literature in Egypt, such as *Instructions of Ptahhotep*, were composed by scribes during the Middle Kingdom and attributed to earlier sages.⁶⁴ The Confucian *Analects* (Lunyu), too, has all the marks of a school text composed to teach advanced scribes.⁶⁵

By the Twentieth Dynasty in Egypt, official scribes were self-possessed enough to put their own names on literary texts as the author. One of the scribes of the royal tomb, who lived a generation or two after Qenherkhpeshef, was called Amennakht son of Ipuy (*jmn-nḥt z3 ipwy*) (fl. ca. 1180–1150 BCE). He was professionally very active and part of the literate life of the village. It was his daughter that stole the shirts of Qaha, and probably him who witnessed the will of Naunakhte (for both, see [chapter 4](#)). While his predecessor Qenherkhpeshef appears to have been content merely to transmit classic literature and royal inscriptions, Amennakht authored his own book of maxims (ostensibly addressed to his apprentice), which was dutifully copied by student scribes in the village. He was probably also the author of several other shorter literary pieces that survive.⁶⁶

Finally, it is in the texts written by scribes that we see the first intimations of the notion of “literary immortality,” the idea that one could have a far greater chance of being remembered and living forever through one’s writings than by leading great armies or constructing massive tombs.⁶⁷ On the back of one of the manuscripts held in Qenherkhpeshef’s family archive, there are copies of several scribal school texts, along with one remarkable text that names famous authors of the past, including Khety (*ḫ.ty*), the probable author of *Satire on the Trades*. It claims for such authors a literary immortality that would endure longer than the achievements of statesmen or the best-made funerary monuments of kings and nobles:

They did not make for themselves pyramids of copper with stelae of metal.
They were not able to leave an heir in the form of children [who would]
pronounce their names, but they made for themselves an heir of the writings
and instructions they had made.

The memory of what they did will be good forever and eternity. *Be a scribe!*
Put it in your heart, so that your name will fare thus. A papyrus roll is more
useful than an engraved stele, than a constructed chapel wall.⁶⁸

In the Chinese tradition, a similar sentiment is expressed in the famous “Letter to Ren An,” attributed to the director of the grand scribes, Sima Qian, who composed the monumental *Records of the Grand Scribe*. In the traditional understanding, the letter explains why Sima Qian accepted a punishment of castration, rather than commit suicide, so that he could finish his work and be remembered through his writings. Scholars have seriously questioned whether Sima Qian actually wrote this letter, but even if it was not really written by him in 91 BCE and is a literary impersonation, written either by his grandson Yang Yun or by the historian Ban Gu a century and a half later, that does not alter the impact of its proclamation of literary immortality. After lamenting that he was not able to suggest any great policies or lead armies for his emperor, and a narration of what led to his castration, Sima Qian remarks that:

The reason I have not refused to bear these ills and have continued to live, dwelling in vileness and disgrace without taking leave, is that I grieve that I have things in my heart that I have not been able to express fully, and I am shamed to think that after I am gone my writings will not be known to posterity. Too numerous to record are the men of ancient times who were rich and noble and whose names have yet vanished away. It is only those who were masterful and sure, the truly extraordinary ones, who are still remembered.

When I have truly completed this work, I will deposit it in the Famous Mountain archives. If it may be handed down to those who will appreciate it and penetrate to the villages and great cities, then though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret would I have?⁶⁹

Scribal Culture for the Afterlife

Not every scribe had the talent of a Sima Qian (or even the lesser talent of an Amennakht son of Ipuy), nor the opportunity to become immortal through his writings, but at least he could continue his special status as a scribe in the afterlife. An analysis of scribal group identity, as expressed in the Chinese mortuary context, has shown that the close association of writing implements with interred administrative or legal documents was a relatively clear diagnostic marker that a tomb belonged to a literate person, usually a scribal official.⁷⁰ This provides novel insights into the role of texts and writing materials in Chinese tombs, and it would be worthwhile to broaden such study to examine this phenomenon cross-culturally, for as we have seen here, scribes in both ancient Egypt and early China developed a very elaborate culture that expressed their group identity. A comparative study of scribes’ tombs allows us to identify shared structural traits and key differences between the two cultures, helping us to understand each of them better. Moreover, this kind of study can be extended to include other important markers in mortuary culture such as individual identity, wealth, status, and ritual expressions for the afterlife transition.

Prior to such comparative analysis, let us first survey four unplundered tombs belonging to scribes, two from China and two from Egypt. Here, the whims of archaeological preservation make our exploration rather difficult.

Finding an unlooted tomb of a low-level scribal official from early imperial China is not that difficult, and in fact, there are at least eight excavated tombs that almost certainly belonged to official scribes.⁷¹ In Egypt, however, having an excavation report of *any* unlooted tomb is quite remarkable, so we must slightly relax our criteria to find comparable examples by also including the tombs of men who we can reasonably infer were official scribes, or who served in low-level administrative positions that had significant scribal or accountancy functions, even though their official title did not mention the word *zš* (scribe).

THE TOMB OF WAH

The tomb of just such a man was discovered in 1920 behind the rocky hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in the Theban necropolis. The Metropolitan Museum of Art expedition uncovered it when they were clearing the enormous and nearly empty tomb of Meketre (*mk.t-r*; d. ca. 1980 BCE), chancellor and high steward to several kings at the end of the Eleventh and beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty in Middle Kingdom Egypt.⁷² The tomb of Meketre is famous for the dozens of wooden models of ships and workshops (plates 9, 10, 11, and 12) found in an untouched storeroom, several of which will be discussed in chapter 6.⁷³ Meketre's tomb was reached by an enormous causeway on the hillside, surmounted by a wide portico, giving entrance to the galleries and the tomb (fig. 6.2). The excavators discovered a sealed tomb cut into the causeway, just below the terrace and portico of the main tomb. The tomb tunnel was twenty-six feet long, but only 5.5 feet wide and tall. The tomb chamber was exactly as it had been left around 1980 BCE; the offerings still placed before the coffin, and the pall casually tossed to the side. The excavator Herbert Winlock recorded and collected the seemingly meager contents and identified the occupant as a man named Wah (*w3h*), concluding that he was simply “a servitor of the great man [Meketre].”⁷⁴ But Winlock should have known better, for being allowed to be buried close to his master and vicariously share in his eternal offerings meant that Wah was probably quite an important man.⁷⁵ This was confirmed in 1935 when Winlock became one of the first Egyptologists to use an X-ray machine to probe a mummy⁷⁶ and promptly discovered that Wah was buried with an astonishingly valuable set of funerary and personal jewelry.⁷⁷

Let us briefly survey the contents of Wah's tomb. In figure 5.3 we see the burial plan produced by Winlock. To the right of the coffin were placed the offerings of a foreleg of beef, some loaves of bread, and a jug of beer. The bundle at the bottom of the plan was the pall that covered the coffin during the funerary procession. Inside the coffin, Wah's mummy was covered in dozens of sheets of linen, but a funerary mask of wood and plastered linen, covered in gold foil, revealed the idealized features of the man (fig. 5.3a). He was laid on his side, his neck resting on a wooden headrest, and facing an undecorated copper mirror (fig. 5.3b). At his feet were placed a pair of stiff, wooden sandals (fig. 5.3f), believed by some to be funerary items not suitable for actual use (like Chinese *mingqi* objects), and to his right were placed three long staves of wood, probably a symbol of his office (fig. 5.3e). The most remarkable find in the coffin was a little statuette of Wah in his prime (fig. 5.3d), possibly intended to serve as a repository for his *ka*-soul, should the mummification of

his body fail to preserve his physical form.

The real key to understanding Wah's identity and status lay inside the wrappings of his mummy. Around his neck were placed four necklaces of different materials. One was made of soldered silver balls and tubes, while another was fashioned from gold balls. A third was made of faience, and a fourth of mixed beads, some from valuable imported minerals like lapis lazuli. On his chest lay an amazing broad collar of faience beads (fig. 5.3c), and he wore beaded anklets. It was one of the scarabs found near his hands that confirms for us Wah's identity and occupational status (fig. 5.3g). This silver scarab carries an inlaid electrum inscription naming Wah as the "manager of the storehouses of the estate" (*jm.j-r'-s.t*), and also names his patron, the nobleman, Meketre, chancellor and high steward to the king. Thus, Wah managed the wealth of one of the richest men in Egypt. One scholar speculates that Wah may have entered the service of Meketre early in his life as a granary scribe, like those depicted in one of the models (plate 9).⁷⁸ Though his title did not carry the prefix of *zš* (scribe), as the manager (*jm.j-r'*) of the storehouses of the estate, his job certainly entailed scribal and accountancy functions. He must have quickly rose in prominence and trust, for he died before he was thirty. His mummy revealed that he suffered from foot and knee problems, caused by his extraordinary height and obesity.

THE TOMB OF DJEHUTY

For our second Egyptian scribal tomb, we move forward to the early Eighteenth Dynasty, just before the reign of Hatshepsut (r. ca. 1473–1458 BCE). This is the tomb of a man named Djehuty (*dḥw.tj*; i.e. "Thoth," the inventor of writing and patron god of scribes), from which the scribal kit in figure 5.1 came. Unlike Wah, who was given his own tomb in the grand funerary complex of his boss, Djehuty was buried along with his wife, and numerous other individuals, behind a brick wall in a reused tomb of some unknown high official of the Middle Kingdom. This was a fairly common practice during the New Kingdom, but does show that Djehuty was not of high enough status to command his own tomb. Djehuty's crypt was excavated in the Theban necropolis by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon in 1911, long before they became famous for discovering the boy king Tutankhamen. Three groups of family interments were sealed behind mud brick walls. At the back of Chamber C, one such multiple family interment contained the coffins of Djehuty and his wife Ahhotep (*jḥ-ḥtp*). Djehuty's coffin had been fairly wrecked by a rockfall, but its inscriptions revealed his name, and it contained a staff (similar to the type found in Wah's tomb) along with an uninscribed scarab ring. His wife's coffin contained two remarkable statues commissioned by Djehuty of her sons, one made of wood and the other of bronze and silver (fig. 5.4), indicating that this couple was either fairly well-off, or at least well-connected.⁷⁹ The couple's fully-decorated anthropoid coffins suggest a high manufacturing standard for the early New Kingdom.⁸⁰

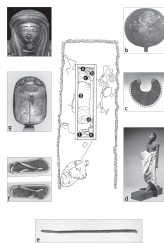


Figure 5.3. The tomb of Wah, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1980 BCE). Causeway of the tomb of Meketre (TT280), Thebes, Egypt. (a) Funerary mask of Wah, cartonnage, wood, paint, gold foil, H 68 cm, W 33.2 cm, D 33.4 cm, MMA 40.3.54; (b) mirror, bronze or other copper alloy, H 14.6 cm, W 16 cm, D 1.8–2.3 cm, MMA 20.3.208; (c) broad collar, faience, linen cord, H 34.5 cm, W 39 cm, MMA 40.3.2; (d) *ka* statue of Wah as a young man, cedar wood with plaster, paint, linen, H 32.2 cm, W 6.6 cm, D 17 cm, MMA 20.3.210; (e) staff, wood, L 144.6 cm, MMA 20.3.206; (f) model sandals, wood, L 27 cm, thickness 1 cm, MMA 20.3.209a, b; (g) scarab of the storehouse overseer Wah, silver, with gold suspension tube, electrum inlays, L 3.9 cm, W 2.7 cm, MMA 40.3.12. Images courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Just next to the coffin of Djehuty lay the oval rush basket with the scribal kit described earlier (fig. 5.1). Carter also found a writing board near the basket, broken in two.⁸¹ The recto side contained a model letter, and the verso more model texts and a list of names, written rather clumsily. It is unlikely that this board was written by Djehuty himself, but it may have been written by a son or scribal apprentice and placed in the tomb as an offering. It was the close association of Djehuty's coffin with the writing implements and a writing board containing school texts that led Stuart Tyson Smith to suggest that he was a professional scribe, even though we do not have preserved titles that could confirm this.⁸²

THE TOMB OF XI

Now, let us move forward over a millennium and across Eurasia to the Qin period in China (ca. 216 BCE). One of the most famous and definitive scribal tombs, Shuihudi tomb number 11, in Yunmeng, Hubei, was discovered in 1975 (fig. 5.5).⁸³ This tomb was one of the largest and deepest Qin tombs in the cemetery, at five meters below the surface. A sturdy wood beam outer coffin was installed at the base of the vertical shaft and divided into two chambers, one for the coffin and one for burial goods. A niche with a door was carved into the eastern wall of the tomb shaft and contained a model of a carriage with horses and grooms. The large wooden chamber was roofed, then covered with half-logs, and the sacrificed head of an ox was placed on top. The single occupant was a male, who died around age forty-five, and based on the chronicle found within his tomb, his name was Xi (Happy).

Certain objects within the tomb were meant to mark the wealth and status of Xi, such as the pair of bronze *fang* vessels for beer (fig. 5.5a), or the pair of bronze *ding* tripods for food, which represented a small but substantial set of bronze ritual vessels. The storage chamber also held a well-made bronze sword with scabbard (fig. 5.5e), a very clear marker of status. Xi's tomb also held dozens of lacquer vessels, mostly for drinking beer, but also a round lacquer toiletry case with bronze mirror and combs, which was given an important

position within the coffin itself, near Xi's head (fig. 5.5f). Other items in the tomb may have been indicators of wealth, but many may have also had important ritual dimensions. The model of the carriage (fig. 5.5d) may have been intended for Xi to ride in a postmortem journey, and the *liubo* game board (fig. 5.5b) may have been a sign of leisured wealth, or as will be explained in chapter 7, a navigation device for the afterlife realm. Also, a valuable agate circlet was broken into seven pieces, which were scattered over the body (upon head, neck, waist, and two hands) in some sort of tie-breaking ritual (fig. 5.5i).



Figure 5.4. Sons of the scribe Djehuty, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1550–1479 BCE). Tomb CC 37, Hall C, burial no. 24, Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. (*left*) The child Huwebenef, wood with separate base, H 35 cm, W 6.6 cm, D 19.2 cm, MMA 26.7.1414a, b; (*right*) the child Amenemhab, bronze, separate silver lotus and wooden base, with pigmented inlays, H 13 cm, W 4.9 cm, D 9 cm, MMA 26.7.1413a, b. Images courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Of special interest are the items placed in Xi's tomb that marked his occupation. Three writing brushes were found in the tomb: two in the coffin, and one in the storage chamber. One was found very near Xi's right hand (fig. 5.5h) and might have been held in writing position. A book knife was found in the storage chamber (fig. 5.5c), and the remains of an iron-wire reinforced silk cap were also found in the coffin, probably a cap of office.

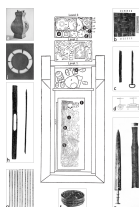


Figure 5.5. The tomb of Xi, Qin dynasty, ca. 216 BCE, tomb no. 11, Shuihudi site, Yunmeng County, Hubei, China. (a) *Fang* vessel, bronze, H 34 cm; (b) *liubo* game board, wood, L 32 cm; (c) ring-handled book knife, bronze, L 17.2 cm; (d) model carriage, wood, W 14 cm; (e) sword with scabbard, bronze, L 47.5 cm; (f) toiletry case with bronze mirror, lacquered wood, dia. 18.1 cm; (g) legal texts, bamboo; (h) brush with case, L 24 cm; (i) fragments of a circlet, agate, original dia. 5.5 cm. Adapted from Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin Mu Bianxiezue, ed., *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu*.

The most striking feature of the coffin, however, was the interment of an entire library of texts, placed all around Xi's corpse (fig. 5.5g).⁸⁴ Several of the texts were related to law, including an abstract from the Qin statutes, a collection of model legal forms, and a question-and-answer dialogue on legal issues. Two versions of a divination manual were also placed in the coffin, one at the head, one at the feet. A copy of a school text on how to be a good official was placed between his legs. A chronicle covering the years from 306 BCE to

217 BCE was found under Xi's head. It is from the notations of family and career events in this document that we are able to identify Xi and know for certain that he was a professional scribe. Born January 14, 262 BCE, Xi probably came from a family of hereditary scribes and was enrolled in scribal training at age seventeen. After three years' training, he was tested on the first day of the eighth lunar month, just as required in the "Statutes on Scribes," and began his first job as a local scribe. Xi eventually climbed through the scribal ranks, serving as a scribe director (*lingshi*) in two different counties, twice joining the army, and eventually becoming the attaché (*shu*) to the governor of Nan Commandery at age thirty-seven, dying less than a decade later, in 217 or 216 BCE.⁸⁵ Perhaps it was the governor, rather than Xi's family, who commissioned his relatively lavish tomb.

THE TOMB OF SHI RAO

Moving forward to the end of the Western Han period (ca. 10 BCE), we arrive at our final scribal tomb (number 6 at Yinwan), belonging to Shi Rao (fig. 5.6), whose life was surveyed earlier. The tomb represents a joint spousal tomb, typical of a middle-class to lower-upper-class burial in late Western Han period China. It seems unlikely that Shi Rao's family could have afforded such a tomb, given his lowly salary grade, but as in Xi's case, his network of connections with superior officials might have garnered him this luxury.

His burial was outfitted with important status markers like the steel sword and ring-pommeled knife found at his side (fig. 5.6a), as well as jade discs and bronze mirrors. Well-crafted items from a scribal writing kit were also placed in his coffin, including a dual-barreled brush case with writing brushes, found near his right hand (fig. 5.6g), a double book knife with dual scabbard (fig. 5.6c), and an ink grinding palette in an elaborate lacquered case (fig. 5.6d). These constituted the equivalent of a present-day executive pen set, the marker of a scribe who occupied a position near the top of his profession.

As with Xi's tomb at Shuihudi, an assemblage of texts was placed within the coffin of Shi Rao, and many of these appear to have been working drafts of government documents actually handled by the deceased during this career. For example, the justifiably famous summary board (fig. 5.6b, right) contains a draft census of Donghai Commandery, including the constituent counties, totals for population, tax revenues, land under cultivation, and more. Ten wooden documents placed in the coffin had been used as greeting tablets (*ye / ci*; fig. 5.6b, left). The tablets were used when one bureaucrat made an official call upon another, and were retained (and buried) to indicate social networks.⁸⁶ The recto listed the person being called upon, while the verso recorded the name and title of the visitor, with some formulaic phrases and the reason for the visit. Eight of the tablets in the tomb were addressed to Shi Rao, while two were addressed from him (including one he wrote to the powerful magistrate of the imperial capital). Many powerful individuals called upon Shi Rao or sent a delegate, inquiring about his health mostly, demonstrating his status and the importance of the position of scribe in the Bureau of Merit.

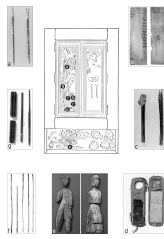


Figure 5.6. The tomb of Shi Rao, Western Han period, ca. 10 BCE, tomb no. 6, Yinwan site, Lianyungang City, Jiangsu, China. (a) Steel sword in wooden scabbard, L 105.5 cm, and ring-pommeled knife, L 101 cm; (b) census summary board (right), L 23 cm, and professional greeting tablet (left), L 23 cm; (c) double book knife with dual scabbard, L 25.5 cm; (d) ink grinding palette in lacquered wood case, L 21 cm; (e) wooden servitor figurines, H 49–51 cm; (f) professional diary on seventy-six bamboo slips, L 23 cm; (g) two brushes, L 23.0 cm, with dual-barreled lacquered wood case. Adapted from Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan et al., eds., *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, 13, 34, 172, figs. 18, 19, 30, 32, 36, 40.

As with the tomb of Xi at Shuihudi, the tomb of Shi Rao also contained a diary, chronicling the second year of the Yuanyan era (11 BCE), described earlier (fig. 5.6f). Along with the greeting tablets, this diary served to identify the deceased and indicated his official position and status.

Finally, it is worth noting that unlike Xi's tomb, Shi Rao's tomb contained three different tomb inventories (*wushu*), written on two different boards.⁸⁷ One lists valuable clothing items used for the funeral, but also records status items like the sword, the knife, and the jade discs. The second inventory lists twenty items once held in a large silk cloth, including all the writing implements found in the coffin, and several that were not found there, either because they were never actually included or because they had completely decayed, including a bag with calculation rods and a bag of ink. That inventory also records a library of texts for the tomb, only some of which were found by archaeologists. The other texts were either written on silk and decayed completely, or they were only “virtually” included in the tomb for prestige. The third tomb inventory lists small personal items once contained in a bamboo box.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Let us look at these four scribal tombs in a comparative framework. Within a mortuary tradition, the deceased and his family can express many aspects of the social, economic, and ritual world in which they actually lived, or one in which they aspired to live. They can also express and perform multiple types of identity, including a personal identity (tied to the individual) and a social identity (tied to occupational groups or other social roles).⁸⁸ Four aspects are of interest here: expressions of wealth and status, personal identity, markers of office or occupational group identity, and ritual expressions of the afterlife transition. Of course, some items in the burials highlighted multiple aspects.

Markers of Wealth and Status

Each of the tomb assemblages expressed a certain claim to wealth and status, apparently an aspirational status above that which the individual was entitled to in life. Some of these markers are material and absolute (and culturally nonspecific), such as the size, depth, and complexity of the tomb, as measured

by the cost of raw materials or the labor-hours required to construct it. The location of the tomb was also an indication of status, as we saw with the modest rock-cut tomb of Wah, which was located in a place of honor within the mortuary complex of his exalted patron. Jewelry and money, which may have additionally carried ritual significance for the afterlife, were also tangible expressions of wealth and status, such as the gold, silver, and lapis jewels of Wah; the steatite scarab of Djehuty (and the bronze statue of his child in his wife's coffin); the coins, mirrors, jades, and glass of Shi Rao's tomb; or the intentionally broken agate circlet in Xi's tomb. The sacrifice of valuable animals was an expression of wealth and status as well, such as the ox head sacrificed atop Xi's tomb or the foreleg of beef offered beside the coffin of Wah.

Some markers of wealth and status, however, were more culturally determined. The two Chinese scribes, Xi and Shi Rao, were each buried with a sword: bronze in the case of the third-century-BCE burial of Xi, and steel in the case of the late first-century-BCE burial of Shi Rao. It was a privilege to wear a sword in early imperial China, for it was the emblem of a rank-holding male, and in the case of Xi, may have indicated his army veteran status as well. The wooden staves found in three of the four tombs are a little more ambiguous, and their meaning may have been more culturally particular. In the case of Shi Rao, the fragmentary cane from his tomb may have been a "dove-finial staff" (*jiuzhang*), which was bestowed by the emperor upon men over seventy and conferred certain benefits on the holder. The wooden staves in the Egyptian tombs of Wah and Djehuty tombs may have been staves of office and authority,⁸⁹ or they may have been walking sticks for a type of postmortem journey.⁹⁰

Markers of Personal Identity

In most ancient mortuary traditions, it was important to mark the personal identity of who was actually in the tomb, especially in those traditions that imagined a postmortem existence of the soul within the aboveground world or in the microcosm of the tomb. These markers were often very culturally specific, though certain indicators, such as the name of the deceased, or treasured personal possessions, are observed cross-culturally. The tombs of the Chinese scribes tended to focus on the written word (such as on seals or in documents) to identify the individual, whereas the Egyptian burials tended to focus on both the name (which was part of the essence of personhood) and the physical form of the deceased, representing the latter through the coffin, the mummy, the mummy mask, and the *ka* statue. Most of these personally identifying objects and inscribed texts were placed within or upon the coffin itself, in close physical proximity to the person being identified.

To identify Shi Rao, we have the wooden seal that probably once contained his name (the faint words vanished soon after excavation), as well as the greeting tablets used during his career. From the tombs of both Shi Rao and Xi we have the personalized diaries or chronicles, indicating important life and career events, both of which were buried close to the body of the men, within the coffin itself. For name identification in the Egyptian scribal tombs, we saw the ornate silver scarab of Wah (fig. 5.3g), which displayed his name and title, the personal names on the now-lost coffin of Djehuty, and the mention of his

name on the statues of his boys that were buried with his wife. So that the mourners (and the soul in the afterlife) could identify the physical form of the deceased, we also have the anthropoid coffin of Djehuty, the gilded mummy mask of Wah (fig. 5.3a), and his *ka* statue (fig. 5.3d), representing him in his prime. In the Egyptian tombs, we also have the mummified corpse of the deceased themselves, which could preserve an identifiable personal appearance and serve as a seat for the soul when it returned to the tomb for offerings. Though it is unclear if intentional mummification was ever practiced in early China, the body's appearance could be preserved through magical means, including the jade suits deployed by royalty. The presence of lacquer toiletry cases with cosmetics in both male and female Chinese tombs (as in Xi's tomb at Shuihudi, fig. 5.5f) may have served a similar purpose to mummification, in that the cosmetics could help the deceased maintain their personal, recognizable, appearance.⁹¹

Markers of Ritual Significance

The items placed in the burial that were ritually significant for the afterlife transition varied greatly among the four tombs and were probably the most culturally determined. For example, we find the real or imitation bronze ritual vessels, used in postmortem ancestral worship, in the tombs of Xi (fig. 5.5a) and Shi Rao. Shi Rao's tomb also contained a ritually charged "soul warmer" (*wenming*) placed over his head, an artifact that served to create a paradisiacal realm for him to observe and journey through.⁹² According to a hypothesis about travel paraphernalia being placed in Chinese tombs for a postmortem journey, the personal carriage and shoes of Xi and the cane and shoes of Shi Rao would all seem suitable for a journey.⁹³ The sandals and wooden staves seen in the tombs of Djehuty and Wah may have served a similar purpose.⁹⁴ Tomb inventory lists, such as the multiple ones found in Shi Rao's tomb, may also have served a ritual function during the funeral and into the afterlife.⁹⁵ It has been suggested that these lists (often with more items listed than were actually buried) may have been interred to impress underworld authorities with the wealth and knowledge of the deceased, to secure preferred treatment in the afterlife.⁹⁶

Both the Chinese and Egyptian mortuary traditions had a history of burying figurines of servitors (see chapter 6), but in our limited sample, only Xi's and Shi Rao's tombs contained such servitors for the afterlife. Egyptian servitor figurines, referred to as *shabti* or *ushabti*, are very common in New Kingdom tombs, but are not represented in our one early New Kingdom example. And while some suggest that *liubo* boards like the one found in Xi's tomb (fig. 5.5b) just represented a leisure game and indicated a level of wealth and status, they also appear to have been ritually charged objects, used for navigating one's way to paradise.

Finally, it has been suggested that the texts included in the tomb of Xi may have had ritual or apotropaic power and were not just included to consult during the afterlife or to serve as markers of occupation. The texts in Xi's tomb were placed around him in a type of protective circle and positioned in key locations such as beneath his head or between his legs. Were they so placed to ward off demons who might harm the deceased?⁹⁷ Did buried books "establish

the spiritual prestige of the deceased” and “protect the tomb from harm with their talismanic magic”?⁹⁸

Markers of Occupation or Office

When we examine markers of occupation or office, we can see how the tombs of scribes differ from regular tombs within the same mortuary tradition. Just as the tomb of a soldier might contain a larger number of weapons than the similarly sized tomb of another individual, or the tomb of a craftsman might hold various tools of his trade, the tombs of scribes in both China and Egypt are distinguished by particular markers of occupation, most notably the writing kits and writing boards with school texts. The counting rods, graduated weights, and scales would also be included in this category, because scribes in both cultures had accountancy duties. Other objects from the tombs that possibly indicated the office or occupation of the deceased include the official cap of Xi as well as the staves of authority of Wah and Djehuty.

Beyond the school texts that are found in both Egyptian and Chinese scribal tombs and that highlighted shared scribal group identity, some of the Chinese scribes were also buried with small archives of texts that were directly associated with their work. Some of the legal texts in Xi's tomb may have been consulted by him during his career as a scribe director when prosecuting legal cases, and the summary boards and promotion records from Shi Rao's tomb may have been actual drafts taken from his office in the Bureau of Merit.

From our survey, it would seem that the presence of a writing kit would be a definitive diagnostic marker of a scribal tomb, but there is a serious problem with identifying all tombs that contain writing kits as the tombs of scribes. Even though writing kits are found in the tombs of low-level administrators in China, they are also seen in the tombs of some elites who wanted to claim cultural literacy.⁹⁹ For example, the tomb at Bajiaolang, likely belonging to Liu Xiu (d. 55 BCE), Regional Lord Huai of Zhongshan (Zhongshan Huai Wang), included copies of the *Analekts* and other philosophical, military, and divination texts, as well as a writing kit placed in the coffin and dozens of uninscribed slips ready to write upon. Liu Xiu was a regional lord and an imperial family member, and certainly not an official scribe, but his writing kit was a marker of his literacy and mastery of elite “tradition texts.”

Similarly, in Egypt, one finds scribal palettes and writing kits not only in the tombs of professional scribes and administrators like Wah, but also in the tombs of members of the elite or even royalty.¹⁰⁰ According to the mural of the funeral procession in the tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty vizier, Ramose, a scribal palette was interred along with the fine furniture for his tomb (plate 7).¹⁰¹ Often, in both China and Egypt, the type of material used to construct the scribe's kit could help differentiate the elites in society, who wished to project an image of cultural literacy, from the regular official scribes, who were expressing their group social identity. For example, the tomb of Tutankhamen contained a deluxe writing kit, which can be compared instructively with the more pedestrian kit in the tomb of Djehuty (fig. 5.1).¹⁰² Though the forms are identical, Tutankhamen's pen-case was made of gilded wood, inlaid with semiprecious stones, and his scribal palette was of gilded wood. The writing equipment in the tombs of royalty like Liu Xiu or Tutankhamen was included to

demonstrate their cultural literacy and their competency to run the affairs of state. Thus, Tutankhamen's elaborate writing kit could reflect his position as "supreme bureaucrat."¹⁰³

Egyptian writing kits also served an important ritual function for the afterlife transition. In addition to Tutankhamen's personal writing kit found in a box in the annex, his tomb also contained fourteen other palettes, including an ivory writing/painting palette inscribed with the name of his half-sister Meritaten and several other palettes that were nonfunctional ritual pieces, including ones made of slate, calcite, and glass.¹⁰⁴ The "Pyramid Texts" say that upon death the king was to take his place beside Re, the sun god, as his scribe.¹⁰⁵ This tradition continues in the later *Book of the Dead*, where it is related that the deceased required a scribal palette so he could replace Thoth in his role as scribe of the gods, to record their speech and carry out dispatches, using the embalming fluids of Osiris to wet the ink.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The scribes of early imperial China and those of ancient Egypt conceived of and expressed their group identity in remarkably similar ways. While the physical materials used for writing might have differed between the two cultures, assemblages of these items came to represent the official scribe and his group identity, symbols that elites soon borrowed to project their own notions of cultural and temporal authority. In terms of training, scribes in both Egypt and China learned under a similar curriculum that progressed from lexical lists to primers to model texts of increasing complexity, before being apprenticed and certified. Moreover, in the life and work of the scribes Shi Rao and Qenherkhepeshef, we see a parallel phenomenon of men in relatively low-status positions who could leverage their hard-won literacy to create social networks of influence that led to tangible power beyond their ascribed status. In the realm of ideology, scribes in both Egypt and China believed that they belonged to a privileged group, and they perpetuated this notion with propagandistic school texts. They also used their special skills not only to transmit the written culture of antiquity found in tradition texts and wisdom literature, but also to compose and even author their own texts, staking a claim to an immortality made possible by the persistence of the written word.

The ways in which official scribes in early China and ancient Egypt projected this scribal culture into the afterlife were also remarkably similar. Scribes tended to be buried with the tools of their trade, including both writing implements and written texts, because as Sinologist Armin Selbitschka remarks, "writing is inseparable from its consequence."¹⁰⁷ But the archive of texts that a Chinese scribe buried with himself was different from the libraries buried with Chinese nobles or kings. A scribe's texts are more likely to be "occasion texts," like administrative or legal documents, rather than "tradition texts," like the Confucian Classics.¹⁰⁸ However, the real cross-cultural parallel between Chinese and Egyptian scribal tombs is the inclusion of school texts, which best represent the group identity of the scribe based on their shared curriculum.

Finally, for our apples and oranges comparison, we must also highlight differences, for they can reveal distinctive features of each society. So, while it

appears that the written word was highly regarded in both societies, written bureaucratic culture penetrated far deeper into Chinese society, driven by a more proactive and authoritarian imperial bureaucratic state (see the epilogue). Egyptian culture focused more on oral forms and visual representation through images and objects. Thus, in terms of the scribal mortuary culture we surveyed, the Chinese scribe was represented through texts, his name, his seal, his diary, or his work documents, but almost never through an image of the man himself. Egyptian individual and social identity were comparatively more often expressed through visual means, where the scribe could be simultaneously represented by not only his name, but also his preserved mummy, his anthropoid coffin, his *ka* statue, and other portraits or models in his tomb. And while there are no visual self-representations of scribes from early China, in Egypt by contrast there is a vibrant tradition that began in the Old Kingdom that takes the form of the scribal statue, a set genre depicting the seated scribe ready to write. By later dynasties it had become a common genre of statuary, used to immortalize the wisdom and administrative authority of the deceased, regardless of whether they were a scribe. Even generals and viziers would depict themselves as a scribe to express these sentiments.¹⁰⁹

Providing a Model Afterlife

(COAUTHORED WITH MARISSA A. STEVENS)

The mortuary culture of both early China and ancient Egypt developed elaborate, three-dimensional tomb models that depict production of food and clothing, offering-bearers, modes of transportation, domestic and public architecture, entertainers, and warrior figures. These realistic models, placed in the crypt or in an adjacent chamber, were an efficacious and economical means of offering perpetual provisioning for the afterlife, whether in the form of food, clothing, housing, transport, service, entertainment, or protection.

Such models, and the goal of providing for the afterlife, are not unique to the civilizations of Egypt and China. Many cultures, including those in Mesoamerica, the Andes, Iron Age Europe, the ancient Near East, and the Aegean developed traditions of miniature funerary figurines and models, and thus any permutation of these cultures would be worthy of comparison. Egypt and China, however, provide a special opportunity to discuss the origin and function of their tomb model traditions, since in both cultures it had been thought that the practice arose out of a desire to substitute for actual human sacrifice. While human sacrifice was present in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age of both Egypt and China (and a common practice of early state formation), this narrative is a bit simplistic. A comparison of models from Egypt and China allows for a more contextualized understanding of the motivations behind the inclusion of such materials in burials and their role in the afterlife. Though two recent exhibition catalogs juxtaposed the traditions of funerary figurines and models from ancient Egypt and early China (among other civilizations), they unfortunately did not engage in any serious comparative analysis.¹

A comparison of the function, production, consumption, materiality, scale, and framing of tomb models and figurines in Middle Kingdom Egypt and Han dynasty China allows us to illuminate the original hierarchies of value along with other ideological and ritual expressions, going beyond more basic understandings of the representational or substitutional nature of the models. The models from Egypt and China were enmeshed in a complex web of relationships with the human or object referent, the written word, and two-dimensional representations that reveal strong similarities in the nature of the afterlife transition, while also allowing us to distinguish particular cultural emphases and the unique artistic evolution in each cultural area.

Origins and Evolution of the Traditions

EGYPT

One persistent Egyptological narrative is that funerary models and figurines were a substitution for human sacrifice, which had been employed by the rulers of Early Dynastic Egypt. In the First Dynasty (ca. 3050–2850 BCE), Egyptian kings (and possibly some of the highest officials) took hundreds of others—likely servants, relatives, bureaucrats, or soldiers—with them into the afterlife via sacrificial burial.² Once authority by this ruling group was established, however, the practice ceased, seemingly replaced by other funerary trends, such as the use of model servants and figurines.

The incorporation of tomb models into burials cannot be so easily explained as just a replacement for human sacrifice. The problem with such a narrative is that it assumes there is a direct developmental line between the interment of real human servants and servant figurines, both of which fulfilled equivalent functions. Such a line cannot be clearly drawn, because Predynastic (ca. 4500–3050 BCE) and Early Dynastic models and figurines often predate the incorporation of the “real” version in a tomb.

The functional and representational significance of these early models and figurines is difficult to determine given the fragmentary nature of the archaeological record. It is not until the late Fourth Dynasty (ca. 2600–2480 BCE) that clear examples of servant statues were incorporated into burials for service in the afterlife. These Fourth and Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2480–2350 BCE) statues appeared alongside *serdab* statues of elite tomb owners. The *serdab* was an inaccessible chamber popular in Old Kingdom elite tombs that adjoined the tomb chapel. In addition to housing a statue of the deceased, it could also host additional statues of the deceased’s family members, and was an area where offerings could be placed for the *ka* (an element of Egyptian personhood) of the deceased.³ Therefore, the servant statues found in these spaces have been associated with the production of afterlife offerings for the deceased.⁴

Mostly related to food production, these Old Kingdom figurines show the preparation of bread and beer and food-serving activities (plate 8).⁵ Other types of production, such as ceramic production, metalworking, or depictions of entertainment, are much less common. Most statuettes are made from limestone, but wooden statuettes of workers, often equipped with limestone tools, also survive from the late Fourth and Fifth Dynasties.

Traditionally, servant statues have not been considered as cult statues, as

most are anonymous and thus interpreted as referring to an abstract concept of production, not to a specific person.⁶ Because the *serdab* chamber contained a statue of the tomb owner and sometimes statues of identified family members, however, one could argue that the servant statues in these same spaces were also meant to represent specific individuals, and that these individuals could benefit from funerary offerings made for the deceased.

The majority of Old Kingdom models feature single figures in postures of production, but other forms of models are also preserved. Wooden model boats appear with increasing frequency throughout the Old Kingdom.⁷ A few architectural structures depicting granaries also survive from this time.⁸

Throughout the Old Kingdom, tomb models appear to be a completely Memphite tradition, limited to tombs surrounding the capital. While one should always be cautious when arguing from a lack of evidence, this northern concentration of models is unsurprising. Elites at the height of the Old Kingdom were buried near the king they served, and their valuable funerary objects were often granted from the palace. Funerary materials during times of strong centralization in ancient Egypt are thus more standardized in their design, materials, and production, due to the influence of royal workshops and lack of provincial stylistic autonomy. As royal authority collapsed at the end of the Old Kingdom, elites found themselves in a position of greater independence regarding their choice of funerary materials. As the burials of these high palace officials shifted to the provinces and their hereditary homes, regional styles and a broader range of subject matter appear in tomb models.⁹

One of the Sixth Dynasty developments in tomb models was the introduction of tableaux of three or more individuals in a single scene. These scenes were nearly all made of wood, as were most models by this point. One such tableau was discovered in 1921 within the tomb of Meryrehashetef (no. 274) at Sedment. The tomb contained three *ka* statuettes of the deceased in various life stages, an unfinished female statuette, and three groups of servants in production tableaux representing baking bread, brewing beer, and cooking meats. These models were found in the backfill of the tomb's forty-foot burial shaft.¹⁰ If this was the intended placement of the models and not a secondary deposit, it represents a new trend regarding the burial of these and other offering materials. The *serdab* chamber was no longer employed as a place for cult activity, and thus the statues of the deceased and servant figurines formerly enclosed in such chambers were moved to the burial chamber or to the burial shaft. Perhaps this placed them closer to the body, or allowed the deceased more direct access to the production of offerings in the afterlife. Practically, because craftsmen likely knew they were no longer limited to produce only figurines that could fit in the confines of a *serdab* chamber, these tableaux, and the even larger and more intricate designs of the First Intermediate Period (2168–2040 BCE) and Middle Kingdom (2040–1656 BCE), expanded into the relatively large space.

The models of the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom encompass tableaux of varying types and stages of food production, architecture, boats, and offering-bearers. As one would expect, the quality of these models varied greatly. It is common in Egyptology to date “poorer quality” models to the First Intermediate Period—a time of political turmoil—and the “better quality” models to the Middle Kingdom—a time of high culture, centralization, and

prosperity. This is, however, an oversimplified interpretation.¹¹ Like all funerary object types, tomb models fall along a continuum of quality, likely resulting from a number of factors, including the status of the deceased, access to quality materials for construction, availability of skilled craftsmen, and the amount of time given to complete the work.

For the First Intermediate Period, the boat was the most common tomb model. The second-most common type of model were those focused on the production of the staple Egyptian diet (i.e., grain, bread, beer). In addition, scenes of cattle-tending, butchery, and agricultural production and storage increased in popularity during the First Intermediate Period and remained popular throughout the early Middle Kingdom. The expansion of agricultural production and storage scenes, and in particular the modeling of granaries, may have reflected the political climate of the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom, where elites, in an atmosphere of absent or unobtrusive kingship, had more control over the production, storage, and distribution of agricultural products.¹²

Regional governors (nomarchs) and their associated elites stimulated the local production of tomb models, so that the corpus peaks with the Eleventh (2130–1990 BCE) and Twelfth (1990–1809 BCE) Dynasties of the Middle Kingdom. The subject matter, geographic spread, and social distribution of models widens to its largest extent, with models found at most major burial sites in Egypt with Middle Kingdom remains.¹³

The models continued to include boats, food production, agricultural scenes, and architecture (plates 9, 10, and 11). Other scenes feature weaving, leather working, metalworking, carpentry, and flax and papyrus production. Some scenes show model militias. While all models reveal an elite lifestyle with command over others, some models, such as sedan chairs, models of singers and musicians, and models of entire houses and garden villas (plate 10), make a very clear statement of luxury and privilege (or the desire for such a life).

This privilege and expanding autonomy of regional leaders was halted by the political and economic crackdown spearheaded by the Twelfth Dynasty king Senwosret III (r. ca. 1887–1848 BCE). The archaeological evidence shows that monumental provincial burials disappeared during his reign, with elite tombs once again being strictly under the purview of the king.¹⁴ With that reestablishment of control, funerary materials became more standardized, and the use of funerary models was almost completely eliminated.¹⁵

However, a new form of serving figurine slowly took hold during the Middle Kingdom and proliferated during the New Kingdom, being used by both royalty and elites. These were the *shabti* figurines that first appeared during the Eleventh Dynasty, when they were mostly made of wax and mud. These figurines take the form of a mummiform individual not performing any production or serving action, but who represented an abstract concept of labor. A group of *shabtis* was meant to serve as the deceased's labor force in the afterlife, either performing services that would directly benefit the deceased or replacing the labor required of the deceased, themselves. *Shabtis* become quite ubiquitous, and their materiality expands to include examples made of wood, faience, and stone.

Only a few model types survive into the New Kingdom (ca. 1548–1086 BCE), limited to finds from royal burials, namely the boat models of Ahhotep¹⁶

and the boat and granary models of Tutankhamen (r. ca. 1328–1319 BCE).¹⁷ This restriction to royal burials is most likely a remnant of the late Middle Kingdom administrative crackdown of Senwosret III.

Burials and funerary materials of elites in the ancient world receive the most attention, but even within this highest stratum of society, we can uncover substrata that can illuminate access to and popularity of certain types of material culture. For tomb models, we can distinguish assemblages from four levels of elite society. For examples representative of low-level officials, we may turn to the Middle Kingdom tombs at Beni Hassan ([map 1.1](#)). The near-intact tomb of the physician Nefery contained several tomb models, all but one of which were positioned on top of his outer coffin lid ([fig. 6.1](#)). Even as a low-level official, Nefery was able to include wooden models in his tomb that were comprehensive in design, well-constructed, and realistic.¹⁸ His tomb included models of a granary, a baker, a female offering-bearer, a male porter, a brewery, and two types of boat. The funerary equipment atop his coffin also included a writing board and scribal palette, like those discussed in [chapter 5](#), suggesting that Nefery's official position as a physician also included scribal functions. A small linen bag placed in the tomb held six model construction tools. The architectural models feature working doorways; real grain is scattered on the granary floor; the human figures wear real linen clothes over white painted garments; and the model wooden tools had working copper edges.

Moving up our elite hierarchy, Meketre was a high official who served during the reigns of Mentuhotep II (r. ca. 2061–2010 BCE), Mentuhotep III (r. ca. 2010–1998 BCE), and Amenemhat I (r. ca. 1990–1961 BCE), achieving the title of vizier. His tomb (TT280) in the Sheikh Abd el-Qurna area of Thebes ([fig. 6.2](#)) is famous for its collection of beautifully rendered tomb models, divided between the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The full assemblage of models contained two house models, twelve model boats, two large female offering-bearers, a group of four smaller offering-bearers, a stable for cattle, a butchery, a granary, a combined brewery and bakery, a weaving shop, a carpentry shop, and a grand scene of Meketre inspecting the cattle of his estate ([plates 9, 10, 11, and 12](#)).¹⁹ Some of the realism observed in the models of Nefery can also be seen in Meketre's models, but only in specific circumstances. For example, it is clear that the two residence models abbreviate certain features and do not attempt to faithfully reconstruct all the architectural features of an elite residence ([plate 10](#)). The interior is far too small, for the model was meant to highlight the attached porch and adjacent garden. In the garden, the individual leaves and fruits of the sycomore fig trees are clearly rendered. In one residence model, the three drain spouts extending from the roof of the porch are pierced, allowing water to actually flow through. The spouts extend far enough for the water to fall directly into the garden pool, which was lined with copper and capable of holding water.²⁰



Figure 6.1. The tomb of the physician Nefery, Middle Kingdom, Eleventh–Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 2130–1887 BCE), tomb no. 116, Beni Hassan, Egypt. Image courtesy of The Garstang Museum of Archaeology, University of Liverpool.

Delving into the tombs of the next highest elite strata, that of regional rulers (nomarchs), none contained more models than that of Djehutynakht, governor of the Hare Nome, one of Egypt’s administrative districts. His career spanned the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties, and his professional achievements are reflected in the tomb he shared with his wife at Deir el-Bersha ([map 1.1](#)). Similar to the placement in other Middle Kingdom tombs, Djehutynakht’s models were deposited in the burial chamber, atop and surrounding the coffins, which were of unbelievable luxury and quality. His collection of models includes fifty-eight boat models, eight individual offering-bearers, four groups of offering-bearers, eight granaries, ten cattle scenes, three baking and brewing models, two agricultural tableaus, two brick production scenes, two weaving shops, one carpentry shop, three processions of soldiers, one group of scribes, and one group of administrative overseers ([plates 13](#) and [14](#)).²¹ The numbers are quite impressive, but most of the models seem hastily made, with little attention to careful craftsmanship or detail, focusing on quantity over quality.²²

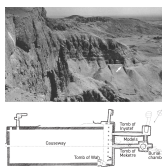


Figure 6.2. Location and plan of the tombs of Meketre and Wah. (*top*) Location of tombs; (*bottom*) plans of tombs. Adapted from Winlock, *Excavations at Deir El Bahri*, 18, fig. 2.

There are, of course, exceptions to the generally lower quality of the models. The well-known Bersha Procession of offering-bearers from Djehutynakht’s tomb ([plate 13](#)) was crafted from higher-quality woods and likely was painted by the same artist responsible for the decoration of the nomarch’s coffin. It is quite possible that this artisan was attached to a royal workshop, and that this procession was added to Djehutynakht’s burial assemblage as a royal donation.²³

For royal examples of tomb models, we turn to the burials of Mentuhotep II and Tutankhamen. Dating to the early Middle Kingdom, Mentuhotep II’s funerary complex featured tomb models of boats, granaries, and bakeries. Some models were found in a chamber located forty-five meters below the courtyard of the burial complex, which was undoubtedly the burial chamber of the king himself. Several other models were found in chambers associated with the

burial of unknown royal women.²⁴

By the New Kingdom, tomb models appear to have been restricted to royal use. The Eighteenth Dynasty burial of Tutankhamen featured many wooden models, including thirty-five boat models and one model granary.²⁵ The boats include both ritual barques and practical riverboats. The granary contained sixteen separate compartments for grains and seeds.

CHINA

Human figurines and architectural models fashioned of wood and clay first appear in tombs in China during the seventh to fifth centuries BCE and become more prevalent during the Warring States period (ca. 453–221 BCE). Like in Egypt, this is traditionally seen as replacing the practice of human sacrifice observed in Bronze Age elite tombs; however, there was a transitional period of several centuries after the development of human figurines when sacrificed humans were still buried in elite tombs. Sometimes, both are present in the same burial, and by the middle Warring States period, this reflected a differentiation in power and class. Wu Hung draws our attention to the large tomb (ca. 350 BCE) at Nülangshan, in Zhangqiu County, Shandong. The tomb was attributed to a general of the state of Qi, and he brought with him several companions in death, including some of his concubines. One of those ladies also brought her own “companions,” a group of twenty-six miniature figurines of dancers, musicians, and audience members, and five model instruments.²⁶ Thus, by the middle Warring States period, the powerful could still command others to follow them into death, while the less powerful used figurines instead.

The territory of what is now China was not a single, unified cultural area during the mid-first millennium BCE, when the practice of funerary models and figurines first arose, so we must distinguish at least two separate cultural traditions.²⁷ In the south, within the lands of the Chu cultural sphere (Hubei, Hunan, Anhui, Jiangsu), we see a well-developed tradition of placing human figurines in burials beginning from the fifth century BCE, sometimes still in conjunction with actual human companions in death. The figurines are invariably made of lacquered wood and are sometimes embellished with silk clothing and human hair. Some of these appear to represent guards, while others are substitutes for courtiers or attendants. In north China, in the cultural sphere of the Shang (ca. 1500–ca. 1045 BCE) and Western Zhou (ca. 1045–771 BCE) dynasties, human representation was not emphasized in pictorial and plastic arts, so human figurines were largely absent here until the mid-first millennium BCE.

Then, beginning by the seventh century BCE in the lands within the Qin cultural sphere (present-day Gansu and Shaanxi), a tradition arose of placing ceramic granary models (*qun*, *cang*) in tombs. These are usually found in medium- to large-scale tombs of male elites. Scholars have suggested that these artifacts were associated with a rising landowning class and a stronger emphasis on providing food for the deceased themselves, not just providing for postmortem ancestral sacrifice using bronze ritual vessels or their ceramic imitations.²⁸ Ceramic models of stoves appear in this same area by the middle of the third century BCE, and with the unification of China in 221 BCE under the Qin, the cultural tradition spread throughout the empire. When this

northern Qin tradition of architectural models merged after unification with the southern Chu tradition of human figurines, it gave rise to the great variety of models and tableaux seen during the Han period (206 BCE–220 CE), including granaries, mills, stoves, wells, pig pens, ox carts, and horse-drawn carriages, kitchens, residences, and entertainments. This great explosion in the popularity of funerary models and figurines developed in conjunction with a new style of horizontal chamber tomb during the Han, which allowed for the meaningful layout and placement of these figurines and models into tableaux.²⁹ While the greatest number and most elaborate figurines were buried in the tombs of royals and nobles, the Han period also witnessed the social expansion of this phenomenon, as middle-class and even some larger lower-class tombs began to employ a variety of ceramic architectural models and figurines.

Now, as we did with Egypt, let us briefly survey the range of this phenomenon during the Qin and Han periods, moving up the hierarchy from non-elite tombs to those of emperors. The people who prepared the joint husband-and-wife tomb of the low-ranked scribe Shi Rao ([chapter 5](#)) went to great lengths to express his individual and scribal identity, but still did not overlook the importance of providing the couple with sustenance and service for the afterlife. In the storage chamber of the tomb they placed seven tall (49 to 51 centimeters) but crudely carved wooden figurines of male and female agricultural and kitchen servitors ([fig. 5.6e](#)), amid serving vessels and storage containers for grain and wine. Between these two assemblages, archaeologists also found miniature models of a wooden sword, a crossbow mechanism, and a spike, which may represent a model armory.³⁰

In another nonnoble tomb at Wuyingshan in Shandong, archaeologists discovered an elaborate tableau of a performance near the deceased's coffin, including earthenware figurines of dancers, acrobats, and an orchestra, performing for a group of male elites ([fig. 6.3](#)), a genre directly descended from the type seen in the mid-Warring States period burial at Nülangshan.³¹ The same tomb also contained a model funeral procession of five horses pulling a carriage and a strange tableau of a huge bird surmounted by a ritual scene.³²



Figure 6.3. Model scene of a performance, Western Han period, ca. 180–157 BCE. Painted earthenware, L 67 cm, W 47.5 cm, H 22.7 cm, tomb no. 11, Wuyingshan site, Jinan, Shandong, China. Jinan Municipal Museum; after Shandong Wenwu Shiye Guanliju, ed., *Shandong wenwu jingcui*, 64, no. 59.

One of the most popular types of Chinese funerary models was representations of architecture, starting with the granary models of the Qin, and later diversifying to include residence compounds, kitchens with stoves, storerooms, watchtowers, privies, pigsties, and wellheads.³³ These are found throughout the empire, often reflecting regional styles in domestic architecture. And while figurines of people are found in the tombs of every class in society, architectural models are largely found in the tombs of commoners (i.e.,

nonnobles, nonroyals), from landed minor officials to merchants—basically those with sufficient resources to afford a medium-sized tomb. In some ways this reflects an economic insecurity, for as we will see, the tombs of nobles, kings, and emperors were large enough to simulate the rooms and cavernous halls of a real palace, obviating the need for puny ceramic models of buildings to serve as a stage for their figurines.

One of the largest and most elaborate residence-compound models ever found was excavated from tomb number 1 at Yuzhuang in Huaiyang County, Henan. This moderate-sized shaft grave probably dates to the early Han period (fig. 6.4).³⁴ The coffin was located at one end of the six-meter-long chamber, along with some earthenware serving and storage vessels, while the middle of the chamber revealed some bronze coins and lead fittings from a decayed wooden model carriage. The architectural model was located at the opposite end of the chamber, suggesting the soul of the deceased would ride his carriage to his residence compound for a banquet. The walled compound consists of multiple residence and service buildings, including a gate house, stable, main hall, kitchen, watchtowers, privy, and a pigsty (with model pig). Some of the walls were painted with domestic scenes, including what may be a generic depiction of the deceased and his wife on either side of the entrance. Some of the six clay figurines (five females and one male) found within the main hall were serving food, while the others were giving a musical performance, similar to that in the model from Wuyingshan (fig. 6.3).

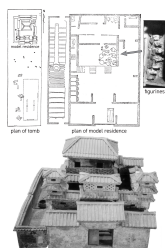


Figure 6.4. Model residence compound, Western Han period, ca. 175 BCE. Painted earthenware, H 84 cm, L 130 cm, D 114 cm, tomb no. 1, Yuzhuang, Huaiyang County, Henan, China. Henan Provincial Museum, photo courtesy of the Henan Provincial Museum, photographer Niu Aihong.

Ascending to the category of nobles' tombs, probably the most famous example is the tomb of Lady Dai (d. ca. 168 BCE) at Mawangdui. Her elaborate burial consisted of a central chamber, surrounded on each side by rooms analogous to areas of a noble residence (fig. 6.5; plate 15). A total of 162 wooden figurines of varying sizes and levels of craftsmanship were placed in the eastern, southern, and northern chambers, serving different household or ritual roles.³⁵ The northern chamber, which represented Lady Dai's dining hall, was outfitted with several types of figurines, arrayed in a tableau around the platform in the curtained room where her soul would perpetually receive sustenance and entertainment. In this chamber, ten large painted wooden figurines wearing real silk clothes represent her female attendants (fig. 6.5b; plate 15b), alongside four female dancers and four singers, accompanied by

five musicians (fig. 6.5a; plate 15a). Two large male figurines, particularly fine and elaborately clothed with embroidered silk, were found in the eastern and southern chambers of the tomb, respectively, placed atop a large group of smaller, less elaborate servitor figurines. The sole of one figure's shoe was inscribed with the words "capped man" (*guanren*). These men have been identified as Lady Dai's eunuch chamberlains (fig. 6.5c; plate 15c).³⁶

Parallel in some ways to the nomarchs of Egypt like Djehutynakht, the regional lords (*zhuhou wang*) of the Han dynasty were hereditary rulers over semiautonomous provinces well beyond the capital area. During the Han dynasty, these men were usually the enfeoffed younger sons of an emperor. The most magnificent un plundered tomb of one of these lords belonged to Liu Sheng (r. 154–113 BCE), Regional Lord Jing of Zhongshan (Zhongshan Jing Wang), son of Emperor Jing. Liu Sheng and his consort, Dou Wan, were buried in adjacent, cavernous, rock-cut tombs, modeled on royal palaces and carved high on Mount Ling in present-day Mancheng District, Hebei.³⁷

Liu Sheng's tomb consisted of a twenty-one-meter-long entrance passage, leading to a vestibule with two wide side chambers (37.45 meters across) representing the royal granaries, storerooms, and stables, then a main vaulted chamber (6.8 meters high) encasing a large wooden replica of a palace hall, and finally a burial crypt with a stone-slab building at the back, representing private sleeping quarters (complete with bathroom). Models and figurines were placed in many of these locations.³⁸ In the central vaulted chamber of his tomb, eighteen painted terracotta figurines of footless attendants or servants (41 centimeters tall) were placed in two groupings near two large fabric tents that formed the dining platforms for the spirits of Liu Sheng and his consort (fig. 6.6a). The figurines were placed near cooking and serving vessels, some of which were also of reduced scale. Two seated figurines made of gold-inlaid bronze, originally from a set of four mat weights, were placed near the "spirit seat" of Liu Sheng (fig. 6.6b) and represented entertainers or storytellers. Another standing bronze figurine (15.4 centimeters high) was found in the burial chamber, outside the nested coffins near an incense burner. Behind the regional lord's seat in the main chamber, archaeologists found the remains of eleven miniature wooden carriages, fitted with gold-inlaid bronze parts. This was probably a procession that would carry Liu Sheng's spirit from his crypt to his audience hall, a grander version of the similar layout seen in the commoner's shaft grave from Yuzhuang (fig. 6.4). One kneeling servant figurine made of stone was found attending the tent of Lady Dou Wan in the main hall of Liu Sheng's tomb, while four more were placed in his burial chamber (fig. 6.6c). Two of these flanked the entrance as guards, one acted as a servant in the sacrificial area outside the nested coffins, and one lowly servant toiled in the toilet for eternity. In the crypt itself, within the outer coffin of Liu Sheng, a jade figurine of a man was found, referred to in the inscription as an "antique jade man" (*gu yu ren*) that could extend one's life, probably representing a Daoist immortal (fig. 6.6d).³⁹ The figurines in Liu Sheng's tomb are performing many of the same actions we saw in Lady Dai's tomb at Mawangdui, such as cooking, serving, attending, and entertaining, but the stage on which they performed was far grander and less cramped, given the royal scale of the massive tomb and its horizontal layout.⁴⁰



Figure 6.5. Figurines from the tomb of Lady Dai, Western Han period, ca. 168 BCE. Tomb no. 1, Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan, China. (a) Musicians with model string and wind instruments, painted wood, bamboo, string, H 32.5–38 cm; (b) serving girl, H 73 cm, painted magnolia wood, with silk clothing; (c) chamberlain, inscribed “capped man,” H 79 cm, W 19 cm at shoulders. Hunan Provincial Museum, photos courtesy of Hunan Provincial Museum.



Figure 6.6. Figurines from the tomb of Lord Liu Sheng, Western Han period, ca. 113 BCE. Tomb no. 1, Mount Ling, Mancheng District, Hebei, China. (a) Serving girl, Painted earthenware, H 41.5 cm; (b) entertainers, bronze, H 7.7, 7.8 cm; (c) attendant, stone, H 34.5 cm; (d) immortal, jade, H 5.4 cm. Hebei Museum, Shijiazhuang. Line drawing adapted from Wen Fong, *Great Bronze Age of China*, 326, fig. 112. Photos courtesy of Hebei Museum, Shijiazhuang.

Of course, the grandest stage for figurines in the ancient world was surely the necropolis of the First Emperor of Qin (d. 210 BCE) near Xi'an. The full scope of this burial is still being uncovered by archaeologists, but excavations and surveys in the last few decades have revealed an enormous complex that represented a microcosm of the entire empire, over which the First Emperor would rule for eternity.⁴¹ Life-size and reduced-scale models and figurines played a central role in making this underworld empire come to life. Nearly all were fashioned from clay or bronze rather than wood, which accords with the Qin northern cultural tradition. Though the burial crypt itself has never been excavated, a later account of its contents written by Sima Qian vividly describes a model world underground, sculpted to simulate the terrain of China, watered with rivers of mercury, filled with architectural models of his palaces, pavilions, and bureaus of government, and staffed by his myriad officials (possibly as both figurines and actual humans).⁴² Recent discoveries have lent credence to this fantastic account.

In 2000, archaeologists uncovered a pit (K0006) near the southwest corner of the tomb mound, which probably represented the office of the commandant of the court. Twelve life-size painted terracotta figurines of robed legal officials stood at the ready to execute the First Emperor's harsh laws.⁴³ A pit to the east of the mound (K9901) revealed a troupe of life-size acrobats, wrestlers, and entertainers whose realistic modeling continues to astound art historians and leads some to point to Hellenistic influence.⁴⁴ Three kilometers to the northeast

of the burial mound, a pit (K0007) was excavated that represented the pleasure park of the emperor, complete with forty-six life-size cranes and ducks cast in bronze, and fifteen full-size terracotta figures of musicians and attendants.⁴⁵ A few hundred meters east of the tomb mound, archaeologists unearthed pits that represented one of the royal stables of the emperor. Several dozen real horses were sacrificed, overseen by clay grooms fashioned at two-thirds life-size.⁴⁶ Pits to the west of the tomb mound represented the imperial menagerie, where real exotic animals and birds were sacrificed next to fourteen pits with kneeling terracotta zookeepers also fashioned at two-thirds scale.⁴⁷

Of course, the discovery that first revealed the magnificence of this site was the terracotta warriors, buried in formation in three pits one kilometer east of the tomb mound. Possibly numbering more than seven thousand figures, the warriors were fashioned using interchangeable molds and later individuated and detailed to give them an efficacious variety. They were then elaborately painted and given actual bronze weapons to wield. In pit numbers one and two, the terracotta figures were accompanied by dozens of real wooden chariots, drawn by ceramic horses (plate 16).⁴⁸ At the western gate leading out of his tomb, the First Emperor was provided with two sumptuous half-scale bronze carriages. These were pulled by bronze horses and driven by reduced-scale bronze driver figurines.⁴⁹

None of the Han emperors who succeeded the Qin attempted a tomb complex of the same gigantic scale, though most were still buried in deep pits under enormous mounds, surrounded by satellite pits filled with terracotta armies and servitors, requiring the construction labor of tens of thousands of men. Liu Qi (Emperor Jing, r. 157–141 BCE) commissioned a mausoleum at Yangling that certainly attempted to create the same kind of comprehensive underworld realm as the First Emperor. His tomb mound was surrounded by at least eighty-six pits, radiating out from each side of the earthen pyramid.⁵⁰ Only a handful have been fully excavated, but the pits may contain as many as one hundred thousand human and animal figurines, far more than those projected for the First Emperor's tomb, yet none of those revealed so far has been life-size. The reduction in scale could have been for reasons of economy or political optics, though even the First Emperor's soldiers may have only been life-size because their patron required them to hold genuine, battle-tested weapons.⁵¹

One of the longest (ninety meters) and most thoroughly excavated of the pits (number thirteen) revealed over seven hundred reduced-size terracotta models of pigs, sheep, goats, and dogs, buried in two levels (fig. 6.7a).⁵² Two full-size chariots with life-size wooden horses were also unearthed from this pit. In another pit, an army of one-third-scale warriors stands in formation (fig. 6.7b). Though the bodies of the clay figures were fashioned in molds like the terracotta warriors of the Qin, most of the Yangling figures were modeled in the nude with genitalia and were later painted, given articulating wooden arms, dressed in fabric clothing and simulated wooden armor, and outfitted with miniature bronze weapons. So, although they were smaller than the terracotta warriors of the First Emperor and made in simpler molds, fashioning Emperor Jing's army may have been just as labor-intensive, because of the level of detail in clothing, armor, and miniature weaponry. These reduced-scale armies appear to have been an innovation at the courts of the regional lords.

Emperor Jing emulated and elaborated upon the tradition, which was subsequently ended (or outlawed) at the regional courts after the suppression of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms (154 BCE) and a sumptuary edict that was issued in 148 BCE.⁵³



Figure 6.7. Animal and human figurines, Western Han period, ca. 141 BCE. Yangling necropolis of Emperor Jing, Yangling Museum, Shaanxi, China. (a) Terracotta animals from pit no. 13; (b) Terracotta warrior from satellite pit. Photo courtesy of National Geographic Image Collection; photographer O. Louis Mazzatenta.

In Egypt, we saw that the tradition of burying detailed tableaux of wooden figurines really only flourished during late Eleventh Dynasty and Twelfth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom. After late Middle Kingdom administrative changes and decorum policies took effect, painted murals and elaborate coffin images and texts took over much of the role once played by the figurines, except for some categories, such as model boats and *shabti* servants. And even though in China the painted murals that developed during the Han period also became the equivalent of model scenes and could substitute for them, the ceramic tomb model and figurine tradition in China continued to flourish for the next seventeen hundred years, until at least the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE), complementing the use of murals and actual objects.⁵⁴

Function of the Models

One of the dominant interpretations of servant figurines and tomb models is that these objects acted as mere substitutes for the “real thing,” an assumption challenged here. In the case of human figures, it is often argued that human models were incorporated in burials after human sacrifice of palace servants and elites fell out of fashion. Being able to command subjects to be ritually killed and buried upon their king’s death requires immense ideological justification and almost absolute power. Sacrificial burials as part of royal and elite tomb complexes were a common component of early state formation worldwide. It was an act of display to showcase power and authority, usually on the part of the successor king in his attempt to consolidate power.

The Early Dynastic kings of Egypt were able to command such a performance of death on a grand scale. For example, surrounding king Djer’s (r. ca. 3040 BCE) tomb at Abydos were over three hundred retainer burials, all interred at the same time as the king.⁵⁵ These sacrificial burials, however, were not restricted to the royal cemetery of Abydos, but also appear in elite tombs of probable royal commission at Saqqara. For example, Djer’s successor, Djet (r.

ca. 2989 BCE), had 174 sacrificial burials surrounding his tomb at Abydos, and the corresponding elite Saqqara tomb (S3504) had sixty-two sacrificial burials associated with it.⁵⁶

In China, human sacrifice was prevalent in Bronze Age royal tombs, like those of the last Shang kings at the Anyang site. For instance, in tomb number 1001, frequently ascribed to King Wu Ding (ca. 1200–1150 BCE), over one hundred skeletons of men were found under the main wooden substructure, in the backfill, and on the terraces and ramps of the gigantic shaft tomb.⁵⁷ Those buried under the coffin with weapons are thought to have been guards. Those buried above the main coffin, accompanied by burial goods, are thought to have been relatives, courtiers, or attendants of the king, while the seventy-three decapitated young men found in the backfill and on the ramps of the tomb have usually been interpreted as sacrificed war captives or slaves destined to serve, or to serve as food, for the dead king.

One problem with viewing the invention of tomb figurines as only serving to replace sacrificed humans is that there are already extant human figurines from the Predynastic period and Early Dynastic period in Egypt, and several centuries of overlap in the utilization of both human sacrifice and human figurines in China.⁵⁸ This contradicts the notion that human figurines were only employed as substitutes for real humans, and that tomb models only acted as mere proxies for the objects they represented, for each civilization clearly possessed a funerary culture in which the concepts of real and representational worked in tandem.

The most frequently cited example in China of human figures supposedly replacing actual people is the interment of the terracotta warriors in the necropolis of the First Emperor of Qin. Scholars have often marveled at the lifelike appearance of these human figures, and remarked on the varied detail of the uniforms, the unique facial features, and the multiplicity of the poses and postures when discussing the realism of the army. For years after their discovery, many thought they were “portraits” of real army soldiers, buried instead of sacrificing the living royal guard. There are, however, other figures or assemblages at the necropolis that are not so realistic, including soldiers with green skin or reduced-scale pottery grooms who accompany real sacrificed horses. Archaeologists have also found human remains (probably those of the Second Emperor’s brothers and sisters), who accompanied the emperor in death, which can be interpreted as similar to the practice found in Egypt, in which critical members of elite society who could threaten the succession of the next ruler were ritually dispatched.⁵⁹

It is far too easy to interpret models as a second-best alternative. We must not fall into the trap of viewing images and representations as inferior to the real thing, but rather, see them as analogous to the real.⁶⁰ This question of functionality relates to other discussions, such as the materiality of the models, but essentially is a question of how objects can best serve the deceased in the afterlife. While certain tomb models may not function like their counterparts in the real world, such a model might be even more efficacious to the deceased than the real thing. The use of models in both Egypt and China, therefore, extend beyond an analog of a real object, performing extended functions that even a real version would fail to provide.

One term that is often referenced in a discussion of Chinese tombs models is

mingqi, commonly translated as “spirit vessels.” In early texts, *mingqi* usually refers to nonfunctional burial goods, or those made from a material which prevented normal function. This distinction, however, is problematic, as is there is little evidence to prove that the term *mingqi* only applied to those tomb objects that were nonfunctional and did not also incorporate those objects of daily life buried in the tomb.⁶¹

Models were not just included in the burial to represent a specific object or person. Rather, their display in a tableau most often represented an act of production. Thus, a scene of a bakery, for example, was not simply meant to provide a quantifiable amount of symbolic bread or to substitute for a baker’s human sacrifice, but to provide the deceased with the ability to produce bread in perpetuity.

The need for perpetual offerings is attested in the “Coffin Texts,” a collection of Egyptian funerary spells that were incorporated into elite burials on coffins, tomb walls, and other funerary equipment. These spells often mention the deceased’s need for perpetual sustenance, which speaks to the Egyptian anxiety of being provisioned properly for the afterlife.⁶² The Coffin Texts may also reference the models themselves acting as provisions, as does the mention of “soul houses” in a text describing the establishment of a house in the afterlife.⁶³

In China, inscriptions on granary models also indicate the desire for perpetual afterlife provisions. One corpus of granary models from an elite Han period burial from Luoyang (no. 61) (ca. 48–7 BCE) featured nine inscribed granary models and five without inscriptions. Those with inscriptions all mentioned that the model held a specific type of grain. In addition, several Han granary models from Luoyang include inscriptions stating that the model contained a quantity of grain far exceeding the volume of the model. A common declaration was that the granary held “ten thousand bushels” of a given grain, magically transforming the storehouses into “inexhaustible repositories of food.”⁶⁴

In both Egypt and China, it seems, there was an emphasis not just on provisioning the tomb with plentiful offerings, but also affording a means of production (including labor), so that the deceased could enjoy perpetual resources in the afterlife. While many of the production models contain human figures posed in the performance of certain tasks, other categories of human figurines from both Egypt and China represent an abstracted labor force, such as *shabtis* in Egypt. Generally understood to be miniature replicas of the tomb owner (although most *shabti* figurines are very generic in appearance), many of these figures were inscribed with a spell in which the speech of the deceased addresses the *shabti* directly and implores the figures to work on his or her behalf should any labor be assigned to the deceased in the afterlife. The Middle Kingdom version of this spell reads:

If The Deceased be detailed for the removal of a block to strange sites of the desert plateau, to register the riparian lands, or to turn over new fields for the reigning king, “Here I am,” you shall say to any messenger who may come for The Deceased when taking his ease. Take your picks, your hoes, your pegs, and your baskets in your hands, just as every young man does for his master.⁶⁵

Chinese tomb figurines, by comparison, are much more individualized than *shabtis*, sharing more characteristics with the earlier Egyptian models. Made out of a variety of materials including lacquered wood and ceramic, many of these figures are intricately modeled, often having unique facial features and adorned with human hair and silk clothing.⁶⁶ Also unlike Egyptian *shabtis*, these figures were never meant to be models of the deceased, but rather represent servants, soldiers, entertainers, and so on. What is most interesting to note about these figurines is that, when accompanied by bamboo inventory slips in tombs, the figures are sometimes described in nonindividualized gendered terms (i.e. “male servant” or “female servant”), but other times are given highly descriptive titles, including a rank and sometimes a specific personal name. This suggests that at least a few of these figurines were not meant to represent simply an abstract labor force but to substitute for a real person who lived on the estate, whose absence from the tomb must be compensated for by the inclusion of the figurine.⁶⁷

The function of models extended beyond the need of a labor force and the manufacture of goods. Tomb models from Egypt and China also represented modes of travel, forces of protection, and acts of entertainment. The model boats of Egypt and carriages of China provide the deceased with transportation appropriate to their respective landscapes. However, these models also assumed the expanded role of providing transport during an afterlife journey, conveying the deceased from the tomb to a desired afterlife realm (see [chapter 7](#)). Model soldiers and guards similarly protected the tomb owner, and models of singers, dancers, and musicians provided perpetual entertainment.

Selbitschka describes groups of tomb models as representing “little empires” for the deceased.⁶⁸ This description is quite apt, for the architectural models, tableau of production scenes, and human figurines do represent a microcosm for the deceased to possess and supervise. This microcosm both served to reflect the world in which the deceased had once lived, replicating many of the spaces and objects with which he or she interacted, and to project a grander, idealized world.⁶⁹ The representation of the large cattle count scene from the tomb of Meketre illustrates the deceased as he was in life—Meketre himself is present in the scene, seated in a position of prominence and authority. In China, the inclusion of modeled architectural spaces mirrors the increasing prominence of large, landed estates during the Eastern Han period, proclaiming power over real-life spaces.

The function of models, however, extended beyond a mere mimicry of the lived world. Tomb models were also meant to depict an aspirational afterlife environment. The multitude of servants, production spaces, boats, carriages, livestock, houses, and granaries probably far exceeded what was actually owned or controlled by the deceased. Perhaps Djehutynakht did own a fleet of fifty-eight boats during his lifetime; more probably, they represented the ideal transport needed for an afterlife journey, and the ideal fishing boats and recreational craft that he would have wanted.

Indeed, most Middle and New Kingdom afterlife visions were aspirational. Mortuary evidence shows that symbols of the royal afterlife enjoyed by kings of the Old Kingdom had, by the Middle Kingdom, begun to be used by regional rulers and elites. By the Middle Kingdom, many now hoped to become a reborn Osiris after death,⁷⁰ receive personal protection from gods like Nut, Isis, and

Nephthys, and by the New Kingdom, even ascend into the heavens to traverse the sky with the sun god in his barque.⁷¹ They also usurped symbols of royal power in their coffin imagery. If one is already aspiring to a semidivine royal status, then why limit oneself to the single kitchen servant one actually employed in life? Why not fill the tomb with dozens of servants to provide for you and your wife in grand style?⁷²

Scholars in China have often assumed that if a man was buried with a watchtower, a granary, and other productive facilities characteristic of an estate, then he must have been a member of the landed gentry and wanted to continue that status into the afterlife. This does not necessarily accord with the evidence, for it appears that even a fairly modest middle-class tomb like that at Yuzhuang (fig. 6.4) could be outfitted with a model of a wealthy residence. Furthermore, inscriptions on objects in some tombs made exaggerated claims like “this underground [estate] will annually produce grain revenues of twenty million [coins].”⁷³ It thus seems that by incorporating not only replicas of what was owned in life but also models of people, objects, and spaces beyond the control of the deceased, the deceased was claiming a higher status in the afterlife than that he had experienced in the world of the living.

There is one contemporaneous Chinese text that vividly portrays the materiality of this afterlife aspiration as expressed through funerary figurines and models. In chapter 29 of Huan Kuan’s *Discourses on Salt and Iron* (Yantie lun; written ca. 68 BCE), the Confucian-affiliated scholars in the debate lament the current trends in burial customs:

In ancient times, the “spirit articles” [buried in the tomb] only simulated the form, but not the real substance [of the actual objects represented], to demonstrate to the common people that they could not actually be used. When it came to later times, there was the practice of burying vinegar and meat sauces in the tomb, as well as the sacrifice of horses of paulownia wood and human figurines, but even when the sacrificial ritual was complete, these items were not fully equipped [or useable]. Today, people spend lavishly [on funerary items] and greatly hoard them [in tombs], and the articles used are just like those used by living persons. Even the officials who are serving in the provinces and regional lordships have only plain carriages with mulberry-wood wheels [to ride in], and yet the carriage models [in their tombs] have enormous wheels encased in leather. And whereas average men don’t even have a shawl to drape over their shoulders, the paulownia wood figurines in their tombs are clothed in the finest silks and satins.⁷⁴

So, while the main complaint of the scholars was that the extreme realism of burial objects threatened to confuse the realms of the living and the dead and revive the ancient abhorrent practice of human sacrifice, they also discuss the aspirational nature of tomb models and figurines, for they remark that the average man (*pifu*) may not even have adequate clothing for himself, but he ensures that his tomb figurines are clothed in the finest silk. To the people of early China and ancient Egypt, the afterlife could seem more important and more real than the world of the living.

Whether serving in a capacity to memorialize the deceased for those among the living or acting as a solidifying agent for the afterlife, models defined the deceased. Wu Hung has called this function “framing,” which “served to define

one or more special position(s) for the dead in a tomb.”⁷⁵ Before the late Western Han period, it was uncommon for the deceased to have a portrait of himself or herself in the tomb. Models, therefore, framed staging areas which helped to indirectly represent the deceased and created symbolic space for them to occupy.⁷⁶

Egyptian tomb owners often had multiple depictions of themselves in the tomb, and models were one avenue for this representation. While Chinese tableau models often reserved an empty space for the deceased (in the form of an unoccupied chair or position of honor), Egyptian tableau models would more commonly show the deceased as one of the represented figures, sometimes labeling him or her. This serves to demonstrate the occupation of space by the deceased that the empty places in Chinese model scenes only imply.

Context of Production

Interpreting the limited evidence, it is clear that the tomb models of Egypt and China were made in a variety of geographic regions and production contexts, from royal and temple workshops to private production, and situations in between. Even the models from a single tomb like those of the vizier Meketre at Thebes or those of regional lord Liu Sheng at Mancheng appear to have come from multiple sources. It also seems that some models were acquired by the tomb owner while they were still alive, whereas others may have been quickly acquired after death.

Much of this interpretation comes from an analysis of the material, production methods, and style of the pieces. A detailed study of terracotta architectural models of the Han period revealed that house and tower models from specific areas of the country displayed consistent regional features that were absent in models from other areas, reflecting local variations in above-ground architectural styles.⁷⁷ It makes sense that lower-cost yet breakable products would be produced by local artisans using local clays. Middle Kingdom tomb figurines and models display distinctive regional characteristics in the examples of granaries, offering-bearers, and boats found at specific sites, each of which represents a local tradition in carving wooden models.⁷⁸

However, some deluxe models found in regional tombs were clearly made in the capital. The large female offering-bearer figurines from the tomb of Meketre (plate 12), whose quality surpassed that of all the other models from his tomb, could only have been made by carvers from the capital in Memphis during the reign of Amenemhat I (r. ca. 1990–1961 BCE), probably in a royal workshop.⁷⁹ Made of the finest imported woods by highly skilled artisans, they were probably a donation from the king to accompany Meketre to the afterlife. Similarly, the figures of the Bersha Procession (plate 13), whose carving and painting were far finer than that of the other “charming but naive” models from Djehutynakht’s tomb (plate 14), appear to have been made by the same master artisan(s) who created the carved ornamental hieroglyphs on the nomarch’s elaborate outer coffin. Scholars have suggested that both were made in a royal workshop, or at least by one of the king’s master artisans sent to el-Bersha to make them for Djehutynakht.⁸⁰

In Han China, we have one explicit parallel case of a sculptural piece that was certainly made in an imperial workshop but later found in a regional tomb. This is the famous anthropomorphic Changxin Palace Lamp found in the tomb of Liu Sheng's consort Dou Wan, and which far outshined any of the human sculptures from his tomb.⁸¹ The beautiful servant-girl lamp was made in an imperial atelier around 160 BCE and stood for a time in the bedrooms and bathrooms of the imperial family. The lamp was later gifted to Dou Wan, who may have been related to the empress dowager.

In another example of imperial bequests of figurines, the new style of clothed terracotta figures with wooden arms found in Emperor Jing's tomb at Yangling (fig. 6.7b) appear to represent a "proprietary type" for imperial family use, though such figures might have been granted to favored ministers for their tombs, such as the clothed army recently found at the tomb attributed to the high official, Zhang Anshi (d. 62 BCE).⁸² These imperial-use figurines were apparently made in imperial workshops located in the capital of Chang'an, for archaeologists in China found large kilns in the Western Market area that produced the terracotta torsos for this style of figurine.⁸³

Beyond the elaborate creations from royal workshops, where did all the other Han terracotta models originate? Curiously, in adjacent areas of the Western Market of Chang'an, archaeologists found another kiln complex, probably a private workshop, that produced simplistic terracotta figurines of people, horses, and birds for the general population.⁸⁴ Early imperial China operated on a cash economy, and artisans operated such private workshops and sold their products in marketplaces for cash. Ancient Egypt had no such money economy, and all goods and services outside the royal command economy had to be acquired through barter, mediated by standards of value in terms of copper or grain.

We know that the royal artisans who created the tombs in the Valley of the Kings during the New Kingdom moonlighted, fulfilling commissions for coffins and other funerary articles for private clients, but there is no evidence for which artisans or workshops created most of the wooden model scenes of Middle Kingdom tombs of the titled class. Many models may have been produced in "temple-related workshops," not only because these shops would have access to the rare woods needed, but also because the models themselves were "magico-religious items."⁸⁵ There is some evidence that the terracotta "soul houses" and concubine figures found in lower-status tombs were produced in workshops attached to the great temple at Karnak. But it is unlikely that all the wooden models came from a single temple workshop source. Considering the large collection of scenes from the tomb of Meketre, the excavator suggested that the models were acquired by the vizier over many years from multiple sources, for he detected the styles of numerous workshops and individual hands.⁸⁶

Social Context of Consumption

Which societal groups were entitled (or could afford) to place figurines and model scenes in their tombs? There does not seem to have been any sumptuary regulations in Egypt or China that would have restricted wooden or ceramic

models to any particular groups, but affordability and access to materials and artisans were just as limiting as any laws. As one can see from the archaeological survey of finds from Egypt and China presented earlier, there seems to have been a fairly close correspondence in the range of social groups engaged in this practice. Regarding the Middle Kingdom Egyptian wooden model scenes, Angela Tooley concludes that tombs with models belonged to “the titled class of Egyptian society, people who held positions of authority in state and local administrations.”⁸⁷ This group included those from the administrative and scribal class, like the physician Nefery at Beni Hassan, regional nomarchs like Djehutynakht, the powerful vizier Meketre, and kings like Mentu-hotep II. Curiously, men with purely religious titles in the temple administration rarely placed models in their tombs.⁸⁸ Below the official class, we rarely see wooden tomb models, but the better-appointed graves of the artisanal or laboring class sometimes contained terracotta figurines or ceramic architectural models (i.e., “soul houses”) that represented, in reduced scale, a formal offering chapel that they otherwise could not afford.⁸⁹ Models like hoes and adzes might be included in graves of the subelite classes, with no figurines to operate them, for it was assumed that the tomb owner would use their own labor in the afterlife.⁹⁰

In China, we see a similar range of classes who were able to outfit their tombs with figurines and models: members of the official class, like the scribe Shi Rao in Yinwan tomb number 6; well-off landowners like the occupant of Yuzhuang tomb number 1; nobles like Lady Dai in Mawangdui tomb number 1; regional lords like Liu Sheng in Mancheng tomb number 1; and, finally, rulers like Emperor Jing or the First Emperor of Qin. However, the practice of interring tomb models never expanded to the lowest classes of laborers and peasants in China, not because of any sumptuary regulations barring their use, but because of economic limitations. To have models in one’s tomb, one had to be wealthy enough to have a chambered tomb in the first place, with enough space to hold a coffin and models.

Geographically, tombs with figurines and models are most prevalent in powerful or prosperous areas of both countries, such as near the capitals of Chang’an and Luoyang in China, or Memphis and Thebes in Egypt, or near the centers of regional administration, like those of the Hare Nome (Deir el-Bersha) or Oryx Nome (Beni Hassan) in Egypt or the southern provincial capitals at Jiangling and Changsha in China. These are the places where agricultural wealth, commercial wealth, and political power were concentrated, as were the requisite material resources and artisan labor.

How gender intersects with the tomb-model consumer is rather complex. Traditionally, women could not hold positions of nontemple authority in Egypt, but they were often buried in tombs with their husbands and thus benefited from the provisioning and service of the model scenes as “mistress of the house.” We see this in the tomb of Djehutynakht and his consort at Deir el-Bersha, where the couple were buried in the same chamber with all their models and matching *ka* statuettes of themselves. But some Middle Kingdom tombs with just female occupants were still outfitted with servant models. This was perhaps possible because the woman had a husband or father who was part of the official class.⁹¹

Similarly, in China, women were legally barred from becoming government

officials, but the official scribe Shi Rao and his wife were interred in a joint burial where they were served by their shared figurines (fig. 5.6e). The noblewoman Lady Dai, however, was given her own tomb (fig. 6.5, plate 15), separate from those of her husband and her son, who were each buried nearby with their own servant models.⁹² Dou Wan, the consort of regional lord Liu Sheng, also had her own tomb at Mancheng, but her tomb was outfitted with just a single model female servant, in the form of the bronze anthropomorphic Changxin Palace Lamp. Her spirit had to travel to her husband's tomb to be served by his numerous figurines in the main sacrificial hall (fig. 6.6).⁹³

Even though the earliest granary models from the Qin state appear to have come predominantly from the graves of elite males, there does not appear to have been a segregation by gender with most model types in later Han tombs.⁹⁴ However, one type of model does appear to have been restricted to male graves, for reduced-scale formations of infantry and cavalry have so far only been found near the tombs of male rulers and generals in Han period China.⁹⁵

Materiality of the Models

Investigating the materiality of tomb models and figurines is critical to a holistic view of their functionality and representational nature. Oftentimes, models were not made from the same material as the object they represented. This could be due to a number of reasons, including a desire to create funerary objects that could withstand the forces of decomposition. In other scenarios, certain materials could have been rare or cost prohibitive. So, what materials are best suited for models, and why were these materials chosen? Pushing even further, why was it apparently so important in some cases to maintain a fidelity of material between the real and the representational?

The choice of some materials over others could reflect a desire of the tomb owner or tomb owner's family to make a social statement about status and wealth. For example, certain wooden tomb models from Egypt were made from indigenous woods, such as sycamore and acacia, while others were made of cedar (or other conifer) wood obtained from Lebanon (see chapter 2). Models and figurines made from imported woods could reflect the owner's elite status, access to long-distance trade or tribute, or connections to workshops with access to such materials. The use of a material like cedar could even indicate the model or figurine was a royal contribution to the tomb. Such rare materials were often controlled by the palace, and their use was restricted. In the case of the tomb models of Meketre and Djehutynakht that feature cedar wood, it seems probable that these objects were produced in royal workshops. Thus, the use of cedar would signal to other elites a close connection to the king, securing the family's status.

Among the models from Liu Sheng's tomb at Mancheng, the materiality of different assemblages displays a clear hierarchy of value and material symbolism.⁹⁶ As surveyed earlier, figurines in Liu Sheng's tomb were found in five separate locations, and these figurines were made of different materials or combinations of materials. The main hall of the tomb contained figurines of clay, wood, and bronze, while the burial chamber held figurines of jade and stone. There is a clear dualism between the more ephemeral materials used in

the models of the outer areas of the tomb and the durability of the stone and jade objects found in the burial chamber that mirrors the transitory nature of this world and the eternal aspects of the afterlife, respectively. A similar hierarchy of value and symbolic association of materials is evident in the use of bronze for the First Emperor's soul carriage but regular wood for the carriages of the terracotta army.

While most models were created out of materials that were either relatively abundant or easily worked (wood or clay), there was also a clear desire in some cases to incorporate some of the same materials that constituted the real objects. For example, in both Egyptian and Chinese granary models, real grain was often placed in the models' storage bins. The Meketre residence-with-garden models feature pools capable of holding water ([plate 10](#)). The incorporation of these elements blurs the line between the model and real, functional space, in what was clearly an intentional display of the models' efficaciousness for the deceased.

Some Egyptian production tableaux, like the carpentry shop seen in [plate 14](#), feature tools with copper blades and tips. Although miniaturized and unable to saw or drill through a plank of wood, these tools evoke the ability of actual production by being composed of the same materials used to create their functional real-life counterparts. Many Chinese models also feature genuine elements, such as the Chu figurines that sport real human hair and clothing. Other human figurines (like those at Yangling) combine clay bodies with wooden appendages and silk clothing. Still other models appear to have been painstakingly modeled to show musculature, anatomy, and individualized facial features.⁹⁷

In all instances, it appears that a goal of "lifelikeness" was sought, but the interpretation of what was lifelike could vary from realism in modeling, to the use of real human features such as hair or real clothing, to the functionality of movable appendages, to the incorporation of near-functional tools. Clearly, models were meant to have a functional capacity in addition to their representational role, and the inclusion of authentic materials into the models of both Egypt and China helped to physically demonstrate this notion. This strategic use of materials was combined with other techniques, such as an aesthetic impetus to make realistic and perfect the image in the eyes of the viewer.

The choice of material expresses a notion of authenticity and fidelity between the models and the full-sized versions they represent, and this reinforces the efficacy of such models. For example, the sycomore trees depicted in Meketre's garden are made from sycomore wood ([plate 10](#)), and the sails of his model ships are indeed made of sailcloth. In models of Egyptian granaries and other tableaux in which scribes are present, there is real and appropriate hieratic writing on the surface of the scribal writing boards. These texts, which are relevant to the scene, promote the realism and functionality of the models, just as the metal-bladed tools of Meketre and Djehutynakht evoke the efficacy of the production scenes and connect the tools to their real counterparts.

It thus seems clear that the elements replicated in models out of the same materials as their life-sized counterparts are meant to assert the functionality of the model. Other features of the models also speak to a high level of efficacy.

The articulation of moving appendages, functioning crossbow mechanisms of the terracotta warriors, accurate drain spouts on the Meketre house models, and functional carriage wheels all support the workability of the models. Further, this efficacy was intrinsically tied to quality, as these features reflect the amount of work and craftsmanship involved in their creation. These details take time, effort, and skill. It was this type of functional efficacy that was key for both Egyptian and Chinese models. The models did not have to be realistic as much as they had to be functional for the afterlife.

That is not to say that realism could not also be a driving force in a model's construction. The First Emperor's terracotta warriors sought to achieve an above-average level of realism with facial features and costume. Other models also added details to evoke realism, such as the addition of fabric clothing to both Chinese and Egyptian figures. The functionality and longevity of such adornment was also taken into consideration, for the figurines from the tomb of Meketre sport garments that were both painted onto the wooden models but also draped in linen over the figures. In addition to the strong cultural value that linen wrappings held in Egypt, this practice could be viewed as a type of double insurance that would maintain the efficaciousness of the figures in the event the linen clothing was separated from the figure.⁹⁸

The coloring of the models also bears on the interrelationship between realism and functionality. When an element of a model was not made out of the same material as the original, pigments were often used to mimic the original material. Red-brown colors could be used to denote wooden features, white for limestone, tan for flesh, and so on. These colors could be very specific, such as the varying skin-tones found on Egyptian models evocative of gender or class. For example, in traditional Egyptian art, men were often depicted with a reddish-brown skin color, while women were often painted with a lighter yellow-tan, perhaps to indicate that women would have spent more time indoors. In contrast to the gendered perspective, sometimes it appears that skin-tone was used as a reflection of class, or at least occupation. Scribes could be depicted with a lighter flesh tone ([plate 9](#)), indicating their indoor labors, while agriculturalists would be depicted as darker, indicative of sun exposure. In other instances, however, paint appears to have been used not as a means of supporting realism, but instead as promoting "surrealism." Some of the terracotta warriors of the First Emperor have striking green skin color, for instance. Does this green paint provide the warrior with apotropaic power befitting the otherworldly nature of this particular army? The green paint provides a level of functionality to the figure separate from its realism, thus showing that functionality and realism were not intrinsically tied.

Viewing the Models

The funerary models and figurines of ancient Egypt and early China were designed with multiple viewing audiences in mind, to be part of the overall spectacle of the funeral and the tomb. Some of these viewers were living members of the community, whereas others were the spirit of the deceased individual, his or her family and ancestors, the gods, and even the animated forces of other figurines. The models were part of the visual and textual

program of the tomb and not isolated objects, for their efficacy was enhanced by their materiality, their placement and scale in relation to other objects in the tomb, as well as by complementary objects, images, and texts that reinforced their function.

We do not have much evidence for the process of a Middle Kingdom elite funeral, but judging from depictions of funeral processions on the walls of New Kingdom tombs at Thebes, such as those of the vizier Ramose (plate 7), the funerary items, including coffins, furniture, scribal palettes, and daily-use items were paraded toward the tomb, carried by servants and male mourners, while lamenting females watched.⁹⁹ This would have been the opportunity for the living community to view the models and appreciate their type, number, and quality.

There is also a strong possibility that priests officiating at the funeral would have recited a spell to “activate” the wooden figurines and models placed in Middle Kingdom tombs, for one of the Coffin Text spells (translated earlier) was specifically written to animate the *shabtis* that played similar servant roles in tombs from the late Middle Kingdom onward.

We know from ritual texts from the third century BCE in China, and other texts from the Han period, that funerary items such as ritual vessels and coffins were also put on display for the mourners and carried in procession to the grave. Some texts mention the presence of thousands of mourners for the funeral of a famous or powerful individual. As in Egypt, this ritual would have marked an opportunity for the family to display the models before they were installed in the tomb. Inscriptions and received texts from the Han period also mention family members and colleagues entering chambered tombs during the funeral for final rites, during which they could also appreciate the installations of model tableaux.¹⁰⁰ One tomb doorway inscription even reminds participants to take off their shoes.¹⁰¹

During the last phase of the funeral, the models and figurines were sealed within the tomb. As one can see from the archaeological survey presented earlier in this chapter, there was a distinction concerning where the models and figurines were placed in most Middle Kingdom Egyptian tombs as compared to their Han Chinese counterparts, and this has important implications for how and when they were viewed. Based on a reasonable sample of unplundered or partially disturbed tombs, the ideal placement for models in Middle Kingdom tombs was next to the left side of the coffin. This was the location of the *wadjet* eye, the painted eye on the wooden coffin through which the deceased saw out into the afterlife world, and also the location of the “false door” portal, through which his or her *ka* would travel to receive sustenance from the provided offerings.¹⁰² If the tomb chamber was too narrow to allow for left-side placement, such as in the tomb of Nefery at Beni Hassan (fig. 6.1), the models would be placed directly atop the coffin lid.¹⁰³ Even judging from their disturbed placement, it also appears that the numerous model scenes and boats of Djehutynakht were originally located either atop or directly adjacent to his coffin and that of his wife. These direct placements clearly demonstrate that the principal spectator of the model scenes was the deceased in their coffin, for the model world of perpetual provisioning was laid out all around them as a miniature estate under their control.

In some much larger tombs, such as that of Meketre, the model scenes were

not placed in the main burial chamber, but in a separate niche cut into the hallway, antechamber, or tomb floor. Scholars argue that this was related to the tradition of the *serdab* chamber in Old Kingdom *mastaba* tombs such as those at Giza, where tomb figurines of servants would be placed alongside the *ka* statue of the deceased.¹⁰⁴ One could still argue that Meketre was present as the direct viewer of his models, however, for in the “cattle count” model and on several of his boats, Meketre himself is represented as a wooden model, seated in a position of mastery and control. The principal spectator in the coffin must have been perceived as omnivident, for many of the figurines placed in architectural settings, such as in Meketre’s butchery or the Yuzhuang architectural model, were obscured by a roof or stacked under other models.

An early Chinese burial, whether in the old pit-style tomb like that of Lady Dai at Mawangdui or in the newer horizontal-chamber-style tomb like that of Liu Sheng at Mancheng, was constructed to represent a residence. Even more so than in the Egyptian context, each chamber of a Han tomb was modeled on the rooms of a residence, be it a merchant’s mansion, a noble’s estate, or a regional lord’s palace. The nested coffins or burial chamber represented the private sleeping quarters of the master, so it would be inappropriate to have tableaux of milling, cooking, serving, or entertaining installed atop or near the coffin, which would be an extreme violation of the rules of decorum. These models had to be placed in the appropriate places in the tomb that represented the storerooms, the kitchen, or the dining hall, reflecting the appropriate segregation of space and roles.

Therefore, in most Han tombs, even though the tomb owner was indeed the master and viewer of his model universe as in Egypt, he had to travel farther from his or her coffin to observe these figures in action. For example, Lady Dai’s spirit would leave her nested coffins in the central chamber and travel to the northern chamber, where a couch was established for her to be fed and entertained by her dozens of wooden figurines (fig. 6.5; plate 15). Personal objects such as her cane, shoes, and makeup box with wig, were placed next to the seat to ensure that her soul could identify her place. In Liu Sheng’s tomb, when his soul left his coffins and stone outer casket, he would pass by his stone guardian figures (fig. 6.6c), mount his miniature soul carriage, and travel to the main hall of his underground palace, where he and his consort would be fed and entertained by their ceramic and bronze figurines (figs. 6.6a, 6.6b), before returning to sleep in his main crypt. Even in the modest, single-chamber burial at Yuzhuang (fig. 6.4), the deceased was provided with a model carriage to travel the five meters from his coffin to the other end of the chamber where his servants and entertainers awaited him in the main hall of the model residence.

Since tomb figurines in early China were considered the equivalent of real people, we should assume that they were considered alive and capable of interaction with each other in the afterlife universe.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, we should extend our concept of the potential viewers of both the Egyptian and Chinese figurines to include the other figurines within the tomb.

VISUAL AND TEXTUAL PROGRAM

In both Egypt and China, the visual spectacle of the models was echoed and reinforced by redundant visual and textual representations of similar subjects.

In Middle Kingdom Egypt, a well-provisioned burial might be outfitted with stores of real food, such as bread and beer, models of individual pieces of food made of faience, wood, and stone, as well as wooden models of bakeries, breweries, and other productive facilities. In case these were somehow compromised or destroyed, the tomb occupant could also rely on the magical spells and offering lists inscribed on the inside of his or her coffin. For example, Djehutynakht was provided with a gloriously painted outer coffin whose interior was painted with a frieze of objects needed for the afterlife and an image of an offering table overflowing with bread, beer, meat, and fruits, just in case the real food ran out or the models failed to produce. Written magical spells accompanied these images, and guaranteed vast quantities of food and drink for the afterlife, maps to the afterlife realm, and an estate on which to enjoy this bounty.¹⁰⁶ In the most lavish tombs, like that of Meketre, these provisions would be supplemented with carved and painted wall murals that depicted nearly the same activities as those seen in the wooden models. For example, on fragments of the murals that once decorated Meketre's tomb, we see images of servants tending cattle, which duplicates the cattle-count, cattle feeding, and butchery models in the storage chamber of his tomb.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, in China, a well-equipped elite burial would not take any chances with having sufficient food for the afterlife and so would have multiple redundant mechanisms to provide everything one might need. For example, Lady Dai was provided with two storage chambers filled with baskets and carafes of real food and drink, including dozens of types of meat and seafood, and a banquet hall with a large meal of meat and beer presented before her seat (fig. 6.5; plate 15). Her tomb was also outfitted with numerous wooden figurines of kitchen and serving maids to prepare this food and entertain her. She was also buried with a written inventory list to magically provide more food should the real food be depleted, as well as “underworld money” made of clay to buy more food if she needed it. Her inventory list records numerous figurines of cattle, sheep, pigs, birds, and dogs, which were not actually placed in the tomb, but their inclusion on the inventory list was viewed as equivalent to interment of the real item. The amount of money, gold, and jewels made of clay listed in the inventory also far exceeds the amount actually found in the tomb. Finally, her nested painted coffins contained images of paradisiacal realms in which she could enjoy unlimited bounty, and a T-shaped banner placed atop her coffin that reinforced these with a depiction of a funeral banquet. This remarkable parallel development in the two traditions of multiple visual and textual systems of provisioning not only demonstrates the great care with which the people of early China and ancient Egypt prepared for their afterlife, but also reveals the great insecurity that they felt about going hungry in the underground world.

ISSUES OF SCALE

Anyone who has played with a doll house or built with LEGO™ bricks understands that engaging in such an activity alters one's consciousness, distorting the perception of both time and space. Phenomenological studies of people engaging with reduced-scale worlds have shown that players perceive that far more time has passed in the activity than had actually transpired.¹⁰⁸

Distortions of space also occur, as the role-player might either perceive himself or herself equally reduced in scale with the figurines or miniature buildings, or conversely, might feel a god-like sense of superhuman scale as they manipulate the smaller world.¹⁰⁹

So, miniature architectural funerary models and tableaux of figurines were not diminutive solely out of economic necessity. Rulers of fiefs and empires could certainly afford life-sized models if that was required or desired. Scholars like Wu Hung have argued that funerary models are reduced in scale because the distorted size alters reality and “constituted a world free from the natural laws of the human world, thereby extending life in perpetuity.”¹¹⁰ Thus, the scale of the miniature world created by funerary models in China and Egypt enabled their core function of modeling an afterlife filled with perpetual provisions and services. And while it is not possible to determine whether funerary models from Egypt and China were “played with” before burial to ritually experience and animate their miniature worlds, the Meketre models were covered in flyspecks and had repaired damage, suggesting that they had been stored aboveground for a significant time before burial and had been manipulated by people in some way.¹¹¹

Variations in scale were not just used to alter the rules of the physical world and enrapture the viewer, they were also employed to replicate and extend social and ritual hierarchies into the model afterlife realm. For example, even though the First Emperor is not represented by a statue in his necropolis, his high-status general officers are represented in terracotta statues that are slightly larger than life-size, nearly two meters tall. The professional cavalry soldiers in pit number two measure 1.8 to 1.9 meters tall, while the thousands of conscripted-peasant infantry soldiers in pit number one vary considerably in height, but most are only 1.75 to 1.84 meters tall, more in accord with the real population of Qin. When we come to the horse-stable pits with the kneeling terracotta slave grooms, we see that the figures are only about two-thirds life-size, emphasizing their base status. A similar hierarchy is seen in the figurines from Lady Dai’s tomb at Mawangdui, for the two tall, elaborately clothed figurines of her chamberlains (fig. 6.5c; plate 15c) were significantly taller (seventy-nine centimeters) than the numerous domestic servant figurines that they supervised (forty-two to fifty-one centimeters). The chamberlains were literally laid atop the servant girls in a further expression of dominance.

In the models from Middle Kingdom Egypt, the tomb owner, such as Meketre or Djehutynakht, is sometimes represented in model form as supervising their model estates. When this same activity is shown in painted mural depictions, the master or overseer is often depicted two or three times larger than the menial laborers in the scene. The three-dimensional world of the tomb models, however, cannot support that level of distortion of scale, for it would break the bounds of the architectural setting and strain the phenomenological effect of the miniature world. Nevertheless, decorum still dictated some adjustment in scale based on status, so we see that when Meketre is depicted as presiding over his cattle-count or under the canopy on some of his pilgrimage boats, his figure is just slightly larger than the low-class oarsmen and servants around him.¹¹² And while it is no longer possible to reconstruct the exact spatial relationship between the wooden statuettes of Djehutynakht and his wife found along with their tomb model scenes, the slightly larger scale

of the masters' figurines (26 and 28.5 centimeters, respectively) in relation to the majority of their model figurines (twenty to twenty-two centimeters), as well as the higher quality of the wood, carving, and painting, clearly indicate their social superiority.¹¹³

In many Middle Kingdom Egyptian tomb model assemblages, one particular genre of figure is often out of scale with the other figures, represented larger than the workers or even the tomb owner. These are the so-called offering bearer figurines. Based on inscriptions, they are thought to be semidivine abstractions, personifying mortuary estates that would deliver sustenance to the deceased in perpetuity, and when found in large pairs, may have represented the duality of Upper and Lower Egypt.¹¹⁴ The female offering-bearers of the Bersha Procession from Djehutynakht's tomb (plate 13) were nearly twice as tall as his worker figurines, like the carpenters (plate 14). The two magnificent examples from Meketre's tomb (plate 12) were half life-size (eighty-six centimeters). The pair were originally placed on each side of the assemblage of models, acting like the coffin-protector deities Isis and Nephthys.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the type and coloring of the dresses and beadwork they are wearing mirror those worn by goddesses in mural depictions.¹¹⁶ The larger relative scale of the figures thus helped to stress their high ritual status.

In both the Egyptian and Chinese models, when human figurines were placed in an architectural setting, the human scale is noticeably larger than the scale of the building. Thus, the excavator of the Meketre models noted that "such figures are too large ever to have gone through the doors of the shops in which they stood."¹¹⁷ It was not important to have a unified scale, for the humans and their actions were being emphasized over the architectural setting. It would have been a waste of materials and space to provide the figures with a similarly scaled building in which to perform their actions. Coming back to modern doll houses, it would be unnecessary and impractical to have the horizontal dimensions of Barbie's Dream House™ built to the same 1:6 scale as the fashion doll herself, for the house would then measure almost three meters wide!

The reduction in scale of tomb figurines also required a certain amount of reduction in detail, an abstraction. Such an abstraction required the makers to emphasize certain features, and this selective representation "radically alters the observer's understanding and comprehension of the object."¹¹⁸ Thus, with a miniature, the viewer is required to make inferences about what is not shown, making him or her actively engaged with the object, which has consequently been made more alive and powerful in the process.

From this abstraction process, we can infer which elements of the funerary tradition were important for the artisans to stress in the representation and which could be elided. In both the Middle Kingdom tradition of wooden tomb models and the Han Chinese tradition of wooden and ceramic models, the key elements that were emphasized included the role, status, and actions of the character. These were expressed with appropriate body postures, clothing, ornament, and accessories, and in the Egyptian case, the appropriate skin tone for their gender and occupation.

In both Egypt and China, having feet on a model, or even a complete lower body, was not viewed as important to the model's function, especially if it represented a servant. For example, none of the terracotta kitchen slaves and

domestic servants represented in the main hall of Liu Sheng's tomb were given feet (fig. 6.6a), for mobility was not associated with domestic servitude, nor was it required for their role of eternal food preparation. In Egypt, almost all of Djehutynakht's models of productive workers end in a pointed peg rather than feet, which made it convenient for doweling into the baseboard, but also kept them pegged to their workplace for eternity (plate 14). The male and female offering-bearers from his tomb, however, usually do have fully modeled feet (plate 13), because movement toward the tomb was central to their role. Surprisingly, in both traditions, engaging or realistic facial expressions were not emphasized. With the exception of the exaggerated expressions of storytellers in the Chinese tradition (fig. 6.6b) or those of the less common musician, singer, or mourner models in the Egyptian tradition, facial expressions on nearly all the figurines were quite schematized, though one could interpret these blank looks as being "serene" and "eternal" as well.¹¹⁹

Conclusions

It is clear that there are notable similarities between Egypt and China regarding the function and range of models and figurines and the class of owners who deployed them. There was also a similar notion of an afterlife where a corporeal soul had ongoing physical needs. Models and figurines demonstrate the extension of the needs of the living into the afterlife and ensured that the tomb owner would be well provisioned, even more so than when he or she was alive. In this capacity, models and figurines both reinforced the status of the tomb owner and attempted to elevate that status in the afterlife. Models and figurines also served as a type of insurance policy in both Egypt and China (along with texts and two-dimensional imagery), with the intention of providing offerings and service in the event that real offerings diminished.

Other characteristics of models and figurines differed slightly between Egypt and China, but these differences were based on environmental constraints or differing notions of personhood and segregated space. For example, the transport of choice was the boat in Egypt, while it was the horse-drawn or ox-drawn carriage in China, yet each of these vehicles served to provide safe passage into the afterlife. The location of models placed in the tomb relative to the owner's corpse also differed between Egypt and China, with Egyptian models placed atop or adjacent to the coffin, whereas Chinese models were placed in separate and appropriate living spaces. Whether or not the tomb owner was represented among the models also differed between Egypt and China. Egyptian mortuary culture represented the tomb owner figurally, whereas early Chinese tombs often left an empty space for the tomb owner without actually depicting him or her. This again reflects a different notion of the person and the soul in Egypt and China, but in both cases, great consideration was given to the framing of the tomb owner and his or her expected interaction with these models.

The deployment of realism and functionalism also varied between the two cultures, but each demonstrates that there was, above all else, a desire for efficacy that was prioritized over basic replication or mimicry. In both cultures, an object needed a combination of realistic and functional components, often

accompanied by texts (spells, offering lists, inventory lists) to ensure the effectiveness of the object for the owner. The trajectory of the historical development of models in China and Egypt also differed. The Chinese established a tradition that grew stronger over the centuries, wherein the diversity and function of the models expanded. In Egypt, the practice quickly waned as the reliance on two-dimensional depictions and texts apparently grew. Since efficacy was the driving force behind models and figurines in both cultures, neither trajectory is surprising.

Gaming the Way to Paradise

Despite some structural similarities in the official religions of early state-level societies, it is generally acknowledged that these religions were quite distinct in their theologies, as well as in their scriptural and ritual details, for religion is probably one of the most culturally determined subsystems of any society. In the two previous chapters, however, we observed some striking convergent developments in the mortuary culture of ancient Egypt and early China related to conceptions of the afterlife. Scribes in each culture chose to express their occupational identity in some remarkably similar ways, through the inclusion of scribal kits and writing exercises. Meanwhile, anxiety about adequate afterlife provisions encouraged the creation of elaborate figurines and models that could provide food, clothing, and service for eternity. The notion of paradise, and the paths (and shortcuts) for getting there, provides material for another fascinating comparison.

What qualifies as a paradise, or more specifically a “postmortem paradise”? Some of the earliest representations to survive in texts and images of a postmortem paradise come from ancient Egypt and early China. They describe a domain, either at the far reaches of the earth or in the heavens or underworld, which is difficult to access, often guarded by lofty elevation or forbidding gates. In Egypt, and to some extent in China, one gained access to this realm through ritual knowledge, but also through ethical conduct or personal piety, for paradise was only meant for the worthy.

Once in this paradisiacal land, one could revel in a blissful existence without end, free from dangers or corruption of the immortal body or soul. The physical environment of paradise is said to be lush, filled with fertile animals and wondrously tall plants, that provide unlimited provisions for the deceased. In one vision of paradise during the Han dynasty, even money literally grew on trees. Furthermore, in paradise, one is said to be able to do as one wishes,

including all the pleasurable activities of the living. The Egyptian texts specifically mention eating, drinking, and having sex there. While in paradise, one could also be reunited with one's loved ones. Finally, dwelling in such a wondrous land often endowed one with special, almost godlike powers. Indeed, the gods were close at hand, and while in paradise one could commune with them or have special access to their abodes or means of transportation. The notions of a postmortem paradise that developed in ancient Egypt and early China would influence later Greco-Roman and Christian conceptions of paradise and Buddhist notions of "pure lands," respectively.

But we must ask why, at a particular stage in these two hierarchical, bureaucratic civilizations of Egypt and China, did the notion of a postmortem paradise develop and spread through much of society? The earliest textual records and the archaeology of each culture indicate that, originally, only the apex of society, the "king of Upper and Lower Egypt" (*nswt-bj.tj*) and the king (*wang*) in China, expected an exalted afterlife. The Egyptian king expected to become immortal as a star in the sky; the king of China's Shang dynasty (ca. 1500–ca. 1045 BCE) expected to become a venerated ancestor, receiving offerings for centuries, or possibly for eternity. Unfortunately, because of the bias in our sources for the earliest stages of these civilizations, we are not sure what everyone else in society desired or expected. The fact that simple graves in Egypt and China usually included a few offerings of food and drink indicates some expectation of a life after death, but how exalted or dreary that postmortem existence, we cannot really know, for these people left behind no texts to express their views. Could it be that they envisioned an afterlife of perpetual servitude to the ruler?

What is suggestive, however, is that notions of a postmortem paradise available to more than the monarch developed at roughly the same time that ideas of virtue and justice were being promoted by political philosophers and other elite writers. The new postmortem paradise was an "ethical" afterlife, for paradise was not meant for all, but only as a reward for the virtuous, the pious, or at least the ritually pure. The themes expressed in these representations of early paradises, justice for the worthy, access for the knowledgeable, recognition for the loyal and devoted, suggest that people were feeling exploited, unfairly treated, and not duly recognized by worldly authorities and structures, and so hoped for compensation in another world. Now, a classical Marxist would argue that this vision was meant to be "opium for the masses," as people were promised a comfortable life in the hereafter by their oppressors to rationalize the exploitative existence they endured in this life. But something more is occurring here, for these visions seem to have been generated by a genuine sentiment felt by many levels in society. Was this yearning for a just reward of leisure and pleasure in the hereafter a response from the weary masses to the escalating violence of warfare, the growing exploitation by a centralized bureaucratic state, and the breakdown of clan structures of governance and justice? Or was it generated by exactly the opposite phenomenon: the growing acknowledgment by the individual of his or her own worth and the value of life brought about by greater prosperity and leisure? In other words, did people fashion the notion of paradise because their lives were miserable and they hoped for something better, or because they loved life and did not want it to end?

The Notion of the Soul in Ancient Egypt

The concept of the soul in ancient Egypt and the abodes of the dead are complex topics. Basically, the Egyptians viewed a person as being made up of components: the material body (with its most important organ, the heart) and two nonmaterial spirit forms called the *ka* (*kꜣ*) and the *ba* (*bꜣ*). Someone's name and their shadow were also important parts of their personhood.¹ The *ka* was the life force of the body. It was the element that animated the person, and what distinguished them from a corpse. It was also thought to be unique to each individual, like a body double. At death, the *ka* separated from the body, but could be reconstituted through ritual and remained in the tomb to receive offerings.² The *ba* was closer to the Western idea of a soul. It held the personality of the human being and was what made them a unique individual. It was also able to venture forth from the tomb and transform itself into different beings, often depicted as a bird with the head of the deceased, to enjoy the sights and sounds of the human world. At night, the *ba* returned to the tomb to rejoin the mummy and revitalize the deceased. Ideally, through ritual, all the parts of the person that had dispersed at death were reunited, and when the *ba* was rejoined with its *ka*, the soul was transformed into an *akh* (*ꜣḫ*), which was an eternal, perfected being, which had special powers and was assimilated to certain deities like Re or Osiris.³

As an illustration of some of this, consider one vignette from the *Book of the Dead* of Nebqed (plate 17). At the top, we see a priest in a leopard-skin robe conducting the “opening of the mouth” ritual upon the mummy of Nebqed, in front of his mourning widow and piles of bread offerings. This ritual served to restore the human faculties to the deceased, allowing him to see, hear, and receive nourishment. Behind the sarcophagus (to the right) we see the tomb chapel of Nebqed and a long shaft leading underground. Toward the bottom of the shaft, the artist has drawn the *ba* of Nebqed, carrying a loaf of bread and a jug of water to feed the mummy, shown now lying on its bier. Above this, we see Nebqed, risen out of the tomb, venturing forth as a transformed spirit of the man in his prime, under the rays of the sun.⁴

The Egyptian Paradise of the “Marsh of Reeds”

The Egyptian cosmos consisted of the land of the living, with the Black Land of Egypt at its center, and the sky above this, viewed as an open expanse of water, supported by columns. Below the earth was the *duat* (*dwꜣ.t*) or underworld.⁵ The paradise of the ancient Egyptians, at least for those of the Middle and New Kingdoms onward, was called the “Marsh of Reeds” (*sh.t-jꜣr.w*). In its developed form, it was represented as a lush and fertile marshland (like prime land in the Nile delta), crisscrossed with waterways and populated by towns with auspicious names, where one could receive eternal provisions. It was originally described as being in the sky, but later became part of the *duat*.

THE PYRAMID TEXTS

The place-name “Marsh of Reeds” is very ancient and dates back to the oldest religious literature in Egypt, the Pyramid Texts (ca. 2360–2168 BCE), which

were carved in the burial chamber and antechambers of the pyramids of Old Kingdom monarchs, beginning in the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2480–2350 BCE). These series of spells, some of which were to be spoken by the deceased themselves, were designed to help the deceased king become an *akh*, depart from his tomb, and ascend his pyramid into the sky, to eventually become a star in the heavens. In these texts, the Marsh of Reeds is a region in the night sky, south of the ecliptic. The Egyptians saw the ecliptic as a long waterway, called the “Winding Canal” (*mr-n-ḥ3.wj*) that bisected the sky. While the Marsh of Reeds was south of this canal, thus nearer to the horizon and toward the east, a parallel Marsh of Offerings (*sh.t-ḥtp*) was located north of the Winding Canal.

According to Pyramid Text spells like these ones from the pyramid of the Fifth Dynasty king Unas (r. ca. 2370–2350 BCE), the Marsh of Reeds served mostly as a waystation for the revived king.

Recitation: Someone has become clean in the Marsh of Reeds: Unas has become clean in the Marsh of Reeds. (spell 164)

[Tefnut] excavates a plot for Unas in the Marsh of Reeds; and establishes his farmland in the Marsh of Offerings. (spell 165)⁶

Though he was given a plot of land here and a throne, the king mainly used the Marsh of Reeds to purify himself before ascending higher in the sky in the barque of the sun god to become one of the circumpolar stars that never set.

THE COFFIN TEXTS

At the very end of the Old Kingdom, as the centralized state collapsed, a new recension of funerary ritual texts appeared, which scholars refer to as “Coffin Texts.” These appear written on the interior of wooden coffins of nomarchs and other local elites throughout Egypt. This phenomenon clearly demonstrates that the afterlife described in the texts was no longer an exclusive privilege of the king, if it ever was. Now, another class of men could become reborn as Osiris and join the sun on his journey across the sky.

Though many of these Coffin Text spells were based on the earlier tradition of the Pyramid Texts, there are significant additions. While the spells continue to focus on reanimating the deceased and providing him with sustenance, there are also new concentrations on protection from harmful spirits, the ability to transform, and the crucial additions of a postmortem judgment and a paradisiacal realm. Overall, the view of the afterlife in the Coffin Texts is more detailed and concrete than that found in the Pyramid Texts, though of course that does not mean that contradictions and multiple scenarios are still not present.⁷

The Marsh of Reeds, which is described in spell numbers 464–68 of the Coffin Texts, had shifted dramatically in its location and purpose since its appearance in the Pyramid Texts. It appears that the Marsh of Reeds shifted from a location in the night sky to a place in the *duat*, the underworld through which the sun travels at night before it is reborn on the eastern horizon. Its name had also become fused with or synonymous with the Marsh of Offerings, formerly a distinct place. Further, while the Marsh of Reeds in the Pyramid Texts was conceived as a temporary place of purification for the deceased king

before his ascendancy to the stars, the Marsh of Reeds/Offerings in Coffin Text spells, like number 464, is now a goal destination—a paradise of inexhaustible provisions, where one finds eternal happiness and worldly pleasures. The spells highlight the importance of knowledge, for knowing the hidden names of the places in the afterlife gives one access to their abundance.⁸

I am one who knows the [God of the Marsh of] Offerings; I row on its waterways. I arrive at its towns. I am stronger and more acute than the spirits, and they have no power over me. I acquire this field of yours, O, Offerings which you love, the Mistress of the Winds; I eat and carouse in it; I drink in it; I plough in it; I reap in it; I am not destroyed in it; I copulate in it; my magic is strong in it; I will not be aroused in it; I will not be apprehensive in it, I will be happy in it. (spell 464)⁹

On several Middle Kingdom coffins from the site of Deir el-Bersha, such as that of Seni (plate 18), we see the first graphic representations of the geography of the Marsh of Reeds.¹⁰ The landscape would be familiar to Egyptians: fertile stretches of land, crisscrossed by waterways. The environment was likely inspired by the Nile delta, which had always carried deep ritual significance.¹¹ The entire landscape is surrounded by an ocean called the “Sea of the Gods.” The internal waterways are captioned and given exact dimensions, like the second from the top, “the waterway of the white hippopotamus. It is a thousand leagues in length. Its breadth has not been told. There is no fish in it. There are no snakes in it.” The little ovals seen in each register are towns, with auspicious names like “Milk Town” and “Town of Fair Offerings.” Calling out the names of these towns guaranteed the deceased access to different types of provisions like milk and grain and also allowed him to gain special powers and be reunited with his deceased parents.¹²

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

The work known as the *Book of the Dead*, or its original title, *Going Forth by Day* (*pr.t-m-hrw*), was a collection of nearly two hundred spells in circulation from the New Kingdom onward, many of which were descended from the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom. Like those texts, they were designed to equip the deceased for a successful afterlife, arming him or her with knowledge and magic to use in the hereafter, and were used by kings, elites, and commoners, alike. A number of spells were selected from the larger corpus and were most commonly written on a papyrus to be included in the coffin (often within a statuette of Osiris), but they might also be found on tomb walls or other objects. Illustrated vignettes to the spells became much more common with the *Book of the Dead* and could even stand alone, without the text of the spell.¹³ One of the most famous spells in the collection was number 125, which represented the final judgment of the deceased, when his heart was weighed against the ostrich feather of *maat* (“truth” or “justice”) in the presence of Osiris. If he proved worthy, and his heart was not weighed down by evil deeds, the deceased could venture forth into the blessed afterlife. If unworthy, his soul was consumed by the Devourer. This was a clear attestation of an ethical afterlife, where the worthy could venture into paradise while the evil were

damned.¹⁴

Spell number 110 of the *Book of the Dead*, which describes the geography of the Marsh of Reeds and lists the names and benefits of each of its towns, is directly descended from the Coffin Text spells, containing many of the same descriptions. But the Marsh of Reeds appears in several other spells in the *Book of the Dead* as well. From spell number 109, we hear:

I know the Marsh of Reeds of Re: its walls are of metal, the barley grows five cubits tall (approx. eight and a half feet), its grain ears are two cubits, with a stalk three cubits; its emmer is of seven cubits, its grain ears of three cubits, its stalks of four cubits. Effective spirits (*ꜣḥ.w*), nine cubits in their height, each of them, reap them beside the eastern *ba*-souls.¹⁵

We finally see here some of the fantastical nature of the paradise of the Marsh of Reeds. It is not just a familiar terrestrial landscape; it is a *supernatural* landscape, where walls are made of metal, where plants destined to provide eternal provisions grow over ten feet high, and where fifteen-foot-tall spirits help to reap the crops.

The New Kingdom vignette to spell number 110, showing the Marsh of Reeds, is usually one of the largest and most detailed in a typical *Book of the Dead* scroll. The beautifully preserved example in [plate 19](#) is from the famous Papyrus of Ani in the British Museum, which dates to the Nineteenth Dynasty, around 1250 BCE. Let us go through the iconography of this depiction.¹⁶ As in the coffin of Seni ([plate 18](#)), one first notices that the domain is completely surrounded by the Sea of the Gods. The deceased arrives at a little inlet aboard one of the boats seen in the bottom register. The left one with the double snake heads is identified as the barque of Wennefer, a name for Osiris. In the next highest register, Ani is shown ploughing in the Marsh of Reeds (the place is named in a caption above the oxen), growing the abundant crops that will provide his eternal food. Above this, he is shown harvesting flax and threshing grain (left), and he is specifically referred to as “Osiris.” To the right of center, Ani is shown worshipping the “Heron of Plenty,” and kneeling next to abundant stores of grain which represent his harvest. The three ovals to the right represent towns. In the topmost register, the god Thoth stands behind Ani, as he worships three gods of the Great Ennead. Ani is then shown paddling a boat, then meeting a falcon-headed spirit atop a tomb shrine (probably his own) and before a standing mummy, which possibly represents Ani’s father.

The example in [plate 20](#) dates from around the same time, but it is not from a papyrus scroll. It is gloriously painted on the seven-foot-tall east wall of the tomb of Sennedjem, a resident of the village of Deir el-Medina, one of the men who constructed the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. At the bottom right, one sees the familiar double-snake-headed boat. The subdivided lowest register is filled with a beautifully rendered, lush landscape of bushes and trees, including some palms heavily laden with fruits. Above this are two registers of agricultural scenes. Unlike in Ani’s papyrus, Sennedjem is shown plowing and reaping with his wife Iyneferti (who was buried in the same tomb). To the right, Sennedjem alone sits before a table laden with offerings. In the uppermost register, Sennedjem and his wife kneel before Re-Harakhte, Osiris, and Ptah, and two smaller figures who may represent Sennedjem’s forbearers.

Continuing the theme of family, the person paddling the boat is not Sennedjem, but is captioned as his young son, Rahotep. To the right of this is an image of Sennedjem's other son, Khonsu, opening the mouth of his father's mummy in the ritual that would allow him to receive sustenance in the afterlife. Overall, Sennedjem's paradise scene is more family-focused than Ani's scroll, befitting a scene in an extended-family tomb.

Situating this paradise scene from the east wall within the decorative program of the whole tomb, we note that the vaulted ceiling is covered with the deities, gates, and challenges of the passage through the *duat*, and the southern wall (on either side of the door) is decorated with a funerary banquet attended by ancestors and living relatives. The central focus image on the northern wall, visible as one enters the tomb, is a standing Osiris. He presides over the final judgment of Sennedjem, who is escorted into the hall by Anubis. The paradise of the Marsh of Reeds on the eastern wall is thus the result of Sennedjem's safe passage through the trials of the *duat* and his vindication before Osiris. Curiously, on the wooden door opposite the final judgement, there is a scene of Sennedjem and his wife playing a board game against an unseen opponent (fig. 7.6).

Some scholars have questioned the appropriateness of calling the Egyptian Marsh of Reeds an actual paradise, for the textual evidence suggests that it was not seen as a permanent abode, where the soul of the deceased would reside for eternity.¹⁷ Many other spells in the *Book of the Dead* relate that the *ba* of the deceased could “go forth by day” on the earth, but was meant to journey every night through the *duat*, as a follower of Re in his barque, to be reunited with his mummy, just as Re united with Osiris.¹⁸ The Marsh of Reeds appears to have been a stop along this journey, probably near the eastern edge, before the sun was reborn in the *akhet* (horizon).¹⁹ This type of cyclical “foreverness” was one of two types of eternity in Egyptian religious thinking, and it was represented by the word *neheh* (*nḥh*). Jan Assmann called it the “time of eternal return.”²⁰ The other concept of eternity was called *djet* (*d.t*) and represented a forever in “completedness,” and was a little closer to our Western conception of eternity. It is clear that one resided in the Marsh of Reeds in *neheh* time, to eternally return, just as with the cycle of the sun.

The Soul and the Afterlife in Early China

Even though, as we have seen, the civilizations of ancient Egypt and early China share some striking similarities at certain points in their evolution, a very key difference between the two involves sheer scale. Early imperial China occupied an enormous territory and was vastly more populous than pharaonic Egypt (approximately fifty million people versus two to three million). The Qin imperial unification brought together, by force of arms, very disparate cultures with dozens of different religious influences and traditions. Though Egypt was a smaller, more bounded geographic unit, even there one finds competing cosmologies and theologies, with plenty of contradictions and a lack of systematization. One could hardly expect a unified worldview or beliefs in a territory as vast and unwieldy as China, even centuries after imperial unification.

But if one follows the account in Yü Ying-shih's classic study on early Chinese afterlife conceptions, one could say that many people in early China also believed in a component soul.²¹ The *po* (corporeal soul) was in some ways like the *ka* of Egypt. It was the life force that animated the body and operated the senses and faculties. One could not live for long without his *po*. Upon death, the *po*, which was viewed as a heavy *yin* force, remained with the corpse in the tomb (or in an underworld realm), partaking of the offerings of family members. The other component was the *hun* (spirit soul) which was responsible for the personality and consciousness of the person. Since it was associated with *yang* force, it was viewed as lighter than the *po*, and upon death it could ascend out of the tomb and travel up to the heavens or some other postmortem destination. Neither of these souls was viewed as eternal, however, as the *po* dissolved when the corpse fully decayed and the *hun* soul would dissipate into the "primal *qi*." This tidy little system has come under strong criticism in recent years, for it appears too scholastic and systematized for the cultural heterogeneity that was early China.²²

As for abodes of the dead, the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty mention only that the dead king would "go up," presumably to the sky, to commune with his ancestors. Later Zhou texts (ca. eighth century BCE) referred in vague terms to a place called the "Yellow Springs" (Huangquan) as an abode of the dead. It seems to be a dreary place, like the Greek Hades or the Jewish Sheol, and is not described in any detail. During the Warring States period, people's concern with the power of the unquiet dead led to the creation of an abode for them far away from the regular world. In this view, the tomb was not meant to be a permanent home for the deceased, but merely a waystation before an arduous journey to the northwest (to the wilds of Mount Buzhou, near Mount Kunlun). Many common items found in Warring States Chu tombs, such as lamps and model carriages, can be seen as travel paraphernalia for such a journey.²³

A ceiling stone from one of the offering shrines in the Wu family cemetery in Jiaxiang, Shandong (ca. 150 CE; [fig. 7.1](#)) provides an illustration of the Han concept of the soul roughly comparable to the papyrus of Nebqed in [plate 17](#). At the lower right, one sees three mounded tombs, next to a building that may represent an offering shrine. The deceased couple are shown in several forms and stages, first as a clothed person (possibly a *po* soul) in the lower right tumulus, then as a winged soul (the *hun* soul) that emerges from the upper tumulus and ascends into the swirling clouds. The deceased husband and wife then ride winged carriages up into the sky, to eventually meet with two frontally posed deities, one male and one female.²⁴



Figure 7.1. Ascension Scene, Eastern Han period, ca. 150 CE. Woodblock print of rubbing, Wu family cemetery, Jiaxiang County, Shandong, China. From Feng Yunpeng and Feng Yunyuan, *Jinshisuo*, 16:48.

The Western Paradise of Mount Kunlun

During the late Warring States period in China, one begins to see representations in texts and material culture of paradisiacal lands located in mountains and on islands at the margins of the Chinese world, filled with magical plants and plentiful game, and populated by fantastic creatures and eternal beings.²⁵ The islands of Penglai, thought to be off the northeast coast, were sought in vain by the First Emperor of Qin and his magicians, who wanted to find the elixir of immortality there. But it was the fascination with a western paradise, specifically the cosmic mountain of Kunlun, that would have a greater and longer-lasting impact on the Chinese religious imagination.

Mountain worship enjoyed a long history in China, for sacrifices to holy mountains are already seen in the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty.²⁶ In the most prevalent cosmology in early China, sacred mountains were thought to serve as intermediaries between heaven and earth. The sky was viewed as a dome over a flat, square earth, held up by mountains serving as pillars. The myth of Mount Kunlun is believed to be a southern tradition, because of its prominence in Chu-inspired poetry and in the visual culture of the Chu region during the late Warring States and Han periods.

The most detailed textual account of Kunlun is found in the “Terrestrial Forms” chapter of the Han-period text *Master of Huainan* (Huainanzi). It forms one of a trio of chapters that describe the cosmos, the earth, and living beings. The geography of the *Master of Huainan* is in accord with Zou Yan’s (d. ca. 240 BCE) “nine continents” theory, so even though Kunlun is said to be in the far northwest of China, it stands in the exact middle of the entire world, as a central world mountain.²⁷ Here is the most vivid portion of the *Master of Huainan*’s description of Kunlun:

In the center [of Kunlun] is a manifold wall of nine layers, with a height of 11,000 *li*, 114 double paces, two feet, and six inches. Atop the heights [of Kunlun] are treelike cereal plants thirty-fix feet tall. [Growing] to the west of these are pearl trees, jade trees, carnelian trees, and trees of deathlessness (*busi*). To the east are found sand-plum trees and malachite trees. To the south are crimson trees. To the north are *bi* jade trees and *yao* jade trees. Nearby are 440 gates.²⁸

From this and other late Warring States and Han period texts that refer to Kunlun, it appears that it was a cosmic mountain (not part of the real, accessible geography of China) and served as an *axis mundi* that connected Heaven and Earth and allowed intermingling between men and gods. Kunlun was said to be incredibly high, with three main peaks; the center one jutted up into Heaven. It was home to fantastically large grain plants, just as we saw in the Marsh of Reeds in Egypt, as well as trees made of gemstones. As with the Marsh of Reeds, it featured special gates and walls that blocked access to the uninitiated or the impious. One special gate within allowed entrance directly into the heavenly realm. Certain gods were said to reside on Mount Kunlun, including the Heavenly Thearch (Tiandi) and the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu). Most importantly, Kunlun was associated with deathlessness (*busi*).

Representations of fantastic mountains are common in the mortuary culture of south China during the late Warring States and Han periods, many probably representing Kunlun. They are displayed on the sides of coffins, such as on the red coffin from Mawangdui tomb number 1, or as ceramic lamps decorated with tall trees, exotic animals, and immortal beings. Some of these lamps have been interpreted as representations of Kunlun, or as a means to guide the soul on a journey to the northwest.²⁹

The Queen Mother of the West

The legend of the Queen Mother of the West was originally separate from the myths concerning Mount Kunlun in the west.³⁰ Later, the two legends were merged, and Kunlun became her immortal home. The first textual references to the Queen Mother of the West appear in late Warring States-period texts (ca. 325–250 BCE), but they are quite disparate and do not provide a uniform representation. In the *Master Zhuang* (Zhuangzi) text, she appears as one who has obtained the Dao, and was thus immortal, and “nobody knows her beginning and nobody knows her end.”³¹ In one of the early chapters of the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shanhaijing) text, she appears in terrifying aspect as a half-human hybrid, residing on a mountain in the far west, and commanding cosmic forces:

Three hundred and fifty leagues further west is a mountain called Mount Jade. This is where the Queen Mother of the West lives. In appearance, Queen Mother of the West looks like a human, but she has a leopard's tail and the fangs of a tigress, and she is good at whistling. She wears a *sheng* on her tangled hair. She presides over the Catastrophes from the Sky and the Five Destructive Forces.³²

The sudden appearance of this divine or immortal female in texts of the late Warring States period, and her association with the far west, led earlier generations of scholars to identify her with the Queen of Sheba, Hera, Juno, or even Artemis.³³ These studies were quite shallow and eventually discredited, but the possibility remains that the Queen Mother of the West was a concept and an iconography imported from further west. A recent study more plausibly identifies her with the Anatolian mother goddess, Cybele, who is usually depicted on a throne surrounded by felines, and where the interlocking top of her throne may have been misinterpreted by the Han Chinese as an oddly shaped crown, the enigmatic *sheng* headdress of the Queen Mother.³⁴ It is quite suggestive that references to the Queen Mother appear in Chinese texts after several centuries of significant cultural borrowings from West Asia, including iron technology, the postal-relay system, and glass eye-beads.

A popular cult worshipping the Queen Mother of the West developed during the Western Han period, under the radar of elite authors, though it sprang suddenly to their attention in 3 BCE, when the deity became the subject of a widespread millenarian panic that spread to one-fourth of the empire, including the capital. It is mentioned three times in the *History of the Han*, and here is the most detailed version:

In the first lunar month of the fourth year of the Jianping era (February and March, 3 BCE), the population were running around in a state of alarm, each person carrying a manikin of straw or hemp. People exchanged these emblems with one another, saying that they were carrying out the advent procession. Large numbers of persons, amounting to thousands, met in this way on the roadsides, some with disheveled hair or going barefoot. Some of them broke down the barriers of gates by night; some clambered over walls to make their way into [houses]; some harnessed up teams of horses to carriages and rode at full gallop, setting up relay stations as to convey the tokens. They passed through twenty-six commanderies and regional lordships, until they reached the capital city.

That summer the people came together in meetings in the capital city and in the commanderies and regional lordships. In the village settlements, the lanes and paths across the fields they held services and set up *liubo* gaming boards; and they sang and danced in worship of the Queen Mother of the West. They also passed round a written message saying, “The [Queen] Mother tells the people that those who wear this talisman will not die; and let those who do not believe my words look below the pivots of their gates, and there will be white hairs there to show that this is true.” By autumn these practices had abated.³⁵

In this rare glimpse of a popular cult, we see a millenarian movement with strong religious fervor (shouting, singing and dancing, running around partially clothed), where it was believed that the Queen Mother of the West was about to arrive, and that only the pious who wore her talisman would be saved.

Beginning in the first century BCE, images of the Queen Mother of the West became common in tombs, tomb shrines, and other elements of Han mortuary culture. Although there is no definitive contemporary text (or captions) that describes her realm (such as spell number 110 in the *Book of the Dead* does for the Marsh of Reeds), one can piece together a fairly consistent picture of the Queen Mother’s court from the iconography of stone carvings, clay bricks, stone coffins, and murals. Some of the major elements of the Queen Mother and her court are represented on the rubbing from a stone coffin in [figure 7.2](#). The Queen Mother is seated on a throne composed of the cosmic directional animals of the dragon (east) and the tiger (west), elevated on the cosmic mount of Kunlun. She wears the *sheng* crown, and is attended by a fox with nine tails, a crow with three legs, a dancing toad, and a rabbit, who is usually the one who concocts the elixir of immortality. To the right, two winged immortals are playing a board game.



Figure 7.2. Paradise of the Queen Mother of the West, Eastern Han period, 2nd century CE. Ink on paper rubbing of stone coffin, Pi County, Sichuan, China. Sichuan Provincial Museum, reproduced with permission.

In many tomb wall depictions, one sees a human couple kneeling before the Queen Mother. It is probable that these supplicants hoped, through their piety

and the sympathetic magic of the image itself, to travel as souls to the realm of the Queen Mother on Kunlun and obtain an audience, where they hoped to receive a cup of the elixir of immortality. Thus, the supplicants kneeling before the Queen Mother were like people in audience upon a terrestrial monarch, relying on the goddess's goodwill, and a demonstration of their piety, to convince her that they were worthy of receiving the elixir. In contrast, in the final judgement of spell number 125 of the *Book of the Dead*, even the king sat before Osiris, and all men were judged by the impartiality of the scale of truth.

Because the Han economy was largely monetized and market driven, it makes sense that money would also be plentiful in paradise. For example, the Queen Mother appears on two special types of money-related funerary objects, particular to Sichuan province. The composite “money trees” found in Han tombs in the area have a ceramic or stone base, often in the form of a mountain, and a bronze superstructure consisting of multiple branches. Cast into the branches are numerous actual-size representations of Han coins. An image of the Queen Mother is molded into the base of many lamps or cast into the decoration. Thus, it is probable that the tree is growing in the paradise of Kunlun, where the Queen Mother reigns, and where money literally grows on trees.

The second type of Sichuan artifact depicting the Queen Mother is a perforated, circular, gilded-bronze coffin ornament. These are circular to suggest not only the shape of Han coins, but also the ancient *bi* disc that symbolized Heaven. On several examples, the Queen Mother is shown in her typical aspect with *sheng* crown, flanked by a dragon and tiger. To arrive at her domain, one must pass through an enormous, towered palace gate, which on some is captioned with the phrase, “Gate of Heaven” (Tianmen; [fig. 7.3](#)). In the heart of this gate is a perforated coin. Thus, in Han Sichuan at least, one could enter paradise through the eye of a coin, which makes for a very stark counterpoint to Jesus of Nazareth's saying that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God”!

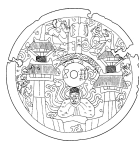


Figure 7.3. Drawing of coffin ornament, inscribed “Gate of Heaven” and “wuzhu [coin],” Eastern Han period, ca. 150 CE. Bronze with engraving and amalgam gilding, dia. 23 cm, excavated in 1985 from tomb at the Dianfenchang site, Wushan County, Sichuan, China. After Chongqing Wushan Xian Wenwu Guanli Suo and Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Sanxia Gongzuodui, eds., “Chongqing Wushan,” 79, fig. 2.1.

Board Game Rituals

In both the Egyptian and Chinese depictions noted here, individuals are shown playing board games in close proximity to a deity associated with the blessed afterlife ([figs. 7.2](#) and [7.6](#)). Do the game-playing scenes merely represent a

pleasant pastime that the deceased hoped to play in paradise? In these cases, I think something far more interesting is at work.

Most board games are metaphors for life and its struggles.³⁶ Chess is obviously a metaphor for noble warfare; Monopoly™ is a metaphor for capitalist property acquisition and competition; The Game of Life™ is a metaphor for, well, “life.” But the Egyptian board game *senet*, interred in tombs and depicted on their walls, and the Chinese game *liubo*, interred in and depicted on Han tombs, shrines, and coffins, could best be called “games of *afterlife*.”

LIUBO

The ancient Chinese game *liubo* (lit., “six sticks”) was played since the fifth century BCE, if not earlier, and the oldest archaeologically recovered game boards date from the fourth century BCE. Texts record that it was particularly popular among the leisured classes, played at lavish banquets accompanied by music and drinking. Deluxe game boards have been found in tombs, like the lacquered set from Mawangdui (fig. 7.4), but basic wooden versions have also been unearthed, like the one from Shuihudi tomb number 11 (fig. 5.5b). While there were several variations on the game, and the board layout was not quite fixed until the late third century BCE, the basic equipment of the classic version seems to have consisted of a square board marked with twelve crooked paths with a square at the middle. Each player controlled six gaming pieces (one set black, the other white). In some sets, one piece was larger than the other five and was called the owl (*xiao*). The smaller pieces seem to have been called the “scattered ones” (*san*). The player tossed a set of six, two-sided throwing sticks, which determined the roll. Alternately, a polyhedral die could be used. Counter chips are often found in tomb sets, probably for keeping score. Players sat across from each other and tossed the six sticks onto a mat placed to the side of the board.³⁷



Figure 7.4. *Liubo* game set. Western Han period, ca. 168 BCE. From tomb no. 3, Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan, China. (left) Game board; (right) box and game pieces, lacquered wood. Hunan Provincial Museum, photo courtesy of Hunan Provincial Museum.

The rules to *liubo* are lost, but recent finds of excavated manuscripts, along with later received texts concerning the game, allow us to plausibly reconstruct the goal of the game, the names of the positions on the board, and even some moves in a game. It is clear from the progression of the position names in texts that one goal of player movement was to approach the center of the board from the periphery, where a reward of points was to be obtained. Scholars have long recognized that the markings on the board represent a cosmogram. The four V-shapes in the corners probably represent the four “tie-down points” where the domed vault of heaven was connected to the four corners of the square earth, and the four T-shapes represent the tie-downs for the two perpendicular ropes

that secured the square earth (scholars still argue about what the L-shapes mean). The destination square in the middle would then represent the central mountain, the *axis mundi*, Mount Kunlun, where the Queen Mother of the West resided.

But the game was also a competition against another person, and this was manifested in one player's pieces "eating" (*shi*) the other player's pieces. It seems that the player's owl, or a piece that was promoted to become the owl, could eat the other player's scattered ones (i.e., pawns). Capturing and eating the opponent's owl was akin to checkmate and ensured victory. A fragment of a text on *liubo* called *The Five Colored Pieces Eat Their Way to Victory* (Wuse shisheng) was recently discovered in the tomb of the Marquis of Haihun (ca. 59 BCE) and contains a description of a killing move.³⁸

The game of *liubo* in ancient China was probably never just a secular pastime,³⁹ though men did engage in serious money gambling over it (playing *liubo* for money was outlawed during the Han), and one famous grudge match between two princes led to a fatal brawl and an empire-wide rebellion.⁴⁰ The game, whose board layout was derived from a cosmogram and whose throwing sticks and die were related to divination practices, was also used as a divination tool itself. In 1993, Shi Rao's tomb at Yinwan (see [chapter 5](#)) revealed an inscribed board that details how to use a *liubo* game board for divination concerning subjects like marriage, travel, and disease.⁴¹

The *liubo* game board design was also used to decorate bronze mirrors, traditionally called "TLV mirrors" by Western art historians. Inscriptions on some of these mirrors indicate that the design was included as an auspicious, apotropaic symbol of good fortune, and was meant to dispel evil forces both above ground and in the tomb. It has been suggested that such mirrors were included in tombs, often placed on the chest or suspended over the head of the deceased, to orient the burial to the cosmos and lead the deceased to paradise.⁴²

On the western walls of stone offering shrines from the Han, and on stone coffins from Sichuan, one often sees humans or immortal fairies playing *liubo* in the presence of the Queen Mother of the West ([fig. 7.2](#), right). From the late first century BCE, this game became closely associated with the Queen Mother and her cult. Recall that in the millenarian panic of 3 BCE, when her frenzied and disheveled devotees thought that the Queen Mother was about to arrive, they were playing *liubo* in the streets. Like the tokens and other emblems of piety in this account, the game was played not as a diversion in a festival atmosphere, but as a means to communicate with the divine, and to demonstrate through victory that one was chosen by the goddess as a member of the blessed select, who would enjoy postmortem immortality in her paradise. Thus, playing the *liubo* game, and doing so skillfully and successfully, was ritually efficacious and helped to bring about this desired outcome. A similar impulse was behind the inclusion of *liubo*-playing scenes in offering shrines and the inclusion of *liubo*-playing figurines in tombs.



Figure 7.5. *Senet* board and gaming pieces, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1548–1302 BCE). Faience and modern wood reconstruction, L 43 cm, W 13.5 cm, H 9 cm, cemetery D, tomb D99, Abydos, Egypt. MMA 01.4.1a, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

SENET

Boards for the ancient Egyptian game *senet* (*zn.t*; lit., “passing”) have been found from as early as the First Dynasty (ca. 3050–2850 BCE) and the game maintained high popularity until the Roman period.⁴³ It was played by all classes of society, from the king, who employed deluxe sets like that found in the tomb of Tutankhamen, down to students or workers who might scratch a game grid on a writing board or on the ground for a quick game.⁴⁴ A standard *senet* board consisted of a grid of thirty squares, called houses (*pr.w*) and two sets of seven playing pieces called dancers (*jbz.w*), differentiated by shape, coloring, or both (fig. 7.5). As in Chinese *liubo*, moves were determined by a toss of two-sided throwing sticks (four in the *senet* game), which one scholar has suggested would have been called fingers (*ḏbꜥ.w*), based on the finger motif seen on some examples. Eventually, the throwing sticks were replaced by the use of one or two astragals (sheep ankle bones), used as dice. During the New Kingdom, many *senet* box-sets were two-sided, with the second side equipped to play a popular twenty-square game that originated in the Near East. Scholars have argued, based on tomb wall depictions, that the two *senet* players would position themselves on the opposite short ends of the board.⁴⁵

The rules to *senet* are almost entirely lost, but it appears that rather than advancing toward each other, the *senet* draughtsmen traveled the same path, along a backward S: down one side, up the middle lane, then down the homestretch. The two sets of game pieces were initially placed in alternating fashion on the first fourteen squares. Through tosses of the four sticks, with potential numbers of one to five, players moved their pieces, attempting to pass or set back their opponent. The most important squares appear to be the final five (numbers twenty-six to thirty), for that is where the endgame culminated. Square twenty-six was usually marked with the word “good” (*nfr*), short for “house of goodness” (*pr-nfr*), a term for an embalming facility. It appears to be an important safe haven that triggered the endgame, which probably required a player to move all his pieces off the board with exact throws. The following square (twenty-seven) was a hazard, marked on early boards by an X-shape, probably shorthand for the verb “to damage [a tomb]” (*hbi*). On later boards, it was marked with the word “water” (*mw*). Texts suggest a player could be “drowned” here, or at least immobilized and set back. The final three squares (twenty-eight to thirty) were marked on early boards with counting-down numbers: three, two, one. But by the Nineteenth Dynasty, when the board had completely become a metaphor for passing through the *duat*, the final five spaces were usually marked with the images of gods, the *pr-nfr* space (twenty-six) with Osiris; the water space (twenty-seven) with Hapy (the Nile inundation spirit); space twenty-eight with the three gods Thoth, Shu, and Maat; space

twenty-nine with Re and Atum; and the final space with Horus.

Since the game *senet* had been depicted on funerary monuments since the Old Kingdom, it would be unwise to say that the game was ever entirely just a secular entertainment. By the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, the allegorical nature of the game was strongly emphasized, as evident by the marking of board squares with gods. The passage across the squares and the contest to reach the end-goal became a metaphor for the passage through the underworld, strongly parallel to the so-called underworld books, like the *Book of Gates*.

A ritual text, called by scholars the “Great Game Text,” and known from recensions on papyrus and one on a tomb wall (TT359), demonstrates how far this allegory was carried and is some of our best evidence for how the game was played.⁴⁶ In the text, the player is initiated to fight alongside the gods of the Council of Thirty, hoping to become one of them. He is guided by the snake-like protector god Mehen in traversing the game board, learning the names of its squares and the perils and benefits therein. He then confounds his opponent, sets him back, tosses him in the water, and emerges at the end of the board, victorious. Mehen then declares him “true of voice,” a vindicated soul, just as in the final judgement before Osiris. Similar to the underworld books, the goal of the ritual is safe passage through the *duat*, vindication, and joining the gods.

The *Book of the Dead* spells include multiple references to *senet*, the most important of which is in the synopsis chapter, number 17, where the deceased is said to be able to play *senet* in a pavilion and emerge as a *ba* soul into the world of the living. The illustrations to this vignette usually show the deceased (and sometimes his spouse) seated in a ritual pavilion playing *senet* against an unseen opponent. The *senet* vignette is also seen painted in tombs, such as that on the inner door of Sennedjem’s tomb (fig. 7.6). Scholars have speculated about tomb scenes such as this, theorizing that the unseen opponent is the person’s own *ba* soul, or that the person was playing against “fate.” But it is very suggestive in Sennedjem’s tomb that the scene on this doorway (the only path out of the tomb for the *ba* soul) is placed directly across from the image of the enthroned Osiris, part of the “final judgment” scene. Since the “Great Game Text” mentions the phrase “you are vindicated” (*mꜣꜥ-ḥrw = k*), just as in the final judgement, it appears that this funerary *senet* scene is also a form of judgement, a game of *senet* against Osiris, to determine whether the deceased was allowed to enter paradise. Chapter 17 of the *Book of the Dead* and the “Great Game Text” have been characterized as ritual texts, designed for use by the dead and by the living.⁴⁷ By skillfully performing the *senet* ritual and its incantations, in the requisite pavilion, and becoming initiated into secret knowledge of the names of the squares and their gods, one could actualize his or her own afterlife pathway and smooth the path to a blessed afterlife.



Figure 7.6. Sennedjem and his wife playing *senet*, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1280 BCE. Inner wooden door of Theban tomb no. 1 (TT1), Deir el-Medina, Egypt. National Museum of Civilization, Cairo, © IFAO.

Separated by thousands of years, and thousands of miles, the two games of *liubo* and *senet* are surprisingly similar in metaphor, structure, and objective. Both games incorporate fate, through a toss of two-sided sticks or rolling dice, to invoke the divine power that ordains the moves on the board. The boards each came to represent (or always represented) cosmograms and a passage through the afterlife. Both games also embodied a life and death competition, where one had to overcome an opponent and other obstacles, proving that fate was on his side, to achieve the desired goal of reaching a blessed afterlife.

The efficacy of these gaming rituals is a little hard for our modern sensibilities to grasp. It is as if when we played Monopoly™, we would hope to affect directly our financial well-being, or by filling our car full of children in The Game of Life™, we would actually increase our chances of procreation, but this is exactly how I suggest people in early China and ancient Egypt thought of these games. We call them “games of chance,” by invoking our modern atheistic viewpoint of the randomness of the universe and our separation of the sacred from the secular, but such viewpoints were unknown to the ancients. It is best to call them “games of fate,” for that better sums up their relationship to the divine. By successfully performing the *senet* ritual, one could actualize the afterlife pathway and ensure his or her postmortem success, and by successfully playing *liubo*, one could guarantee his or her soul proper alignment to the cosmos and a smooth transition to the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West.

Paradisaical Legacies

These early conceptions of paradise, the Marsh of Reeds in Egypt and the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West on Mount Kunlun in China, were expressions of people’s desire for salvation and immortality. They were to have a lasting legacy in the Mediterranean world and East Asia.

With the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism into China in successive centuries, one of the most popular ideas was that of the Pure Land (Jingtu) of Amitabha Buddha, located in the far west of the cosmos. Those who were virtuous and pious in life, and recited the name of this Buddha frequently, would be transported to his Pure Land of Sukhavati and be reborn in the bud of a lotus flower. When this flower opened and they heard the words of the Buddha, they would achieve enlightenment rapidly. It is possible that earlier notions of a Western paradise during the Han greatly enhanced the acceptance and development of this tradition within East Asian Buddhism.⁴⁸

Greek culture since the Bronze Age was indebted to the venerable civilization of Egypt for a number of cultural borrowings, one of which was a notion of a paradisiacal afterlife for the heroic and worthy, called the Elysian Fields (*Ēlysion pedion*), modeled on the Marsh of Reeds. It first appears in book 4 of Homer’s *Odyssey*, when Menelaus is told by a seer in Egypt that he is destined for a special afterlife called the Elysian Fields, at the ends of the earth, where “a very easy livelihood exists for men. There is no snow, nor great winter, nor ever a thunderstorm; but Oceanus continually sends the breezes of shrilly blowing Zephyr to refresh men” (*Odyssey* 4.561–70).

Scholars have long recognized that this eschatological concept is an

intrusion into the Homeric epics, which nearly always follow an indigenous Greek concept of the “halls of Hades.” Phonetic reconstruction shows that the word *Elysium* in Greek was borrowed directly from the *iaru* of the Egyptian Marsh of Reeds (*sekhet iaru*).⁴⁹ It was later merged with the notion seen in the works of Hesiod of the “Isles of the Blessed.” The concept becomes even more popular in the Roman world, described by Virgil and Plutarch, and appears on several tomb murals. The painter’s focus is often on the lush, oversized plant life and the leisure activities, where people are sometimes shown playing games.⁵⁰ In some early Christian burials, the Elysian Fields is used as a model for the Christian paradise of the Kingdom of God.

Let us close this chapter on a slightly cynical note. While the Marsh of Reeds in Egypt and the Mount Kunlun paradise of the Queen Mother of the West in early China demonstrate a similar desire for personal salvation and a notion of an ethical afterlife only for the virtuous or pious, one should realize that in popular religion, pragmatism and secular impulses are always present. While, ideally, one should be virtuous and pious to enter the Marsh of Reeds, one could also use spells and talismans to guarantee a positive result at the weighing of the heart in the final judgment. The vignette of chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead*, which invariably shows a positive outcome of the weighing, was itself just such a talisman, designed to guarantee this result.⁵¹ By lavishing the Queen Mother with sacrifice and praise, and using talismans like money trees and tomb images (and maybe by success in the *liubo* board game), one could impress the Queen Mother as a supplicant in her realm, and obtain the elixir of immortality, despite personal failings. One need only think of later Christian deathbed confessions, or sword-wielding samurai of medieval Japan speaking the name of Amitabha only on their deathbeds to gain entrance into paradise, to realize that one could always game the system (figuratively and literally), leading to the inevitability that the lay believer or even the impious, the insincere, or the wicked could also enter paradise.

Epilogue

We have reached the end of our journey through the land “All under Heaven” of early imperial China and the “Black Land” of pharaonic Egypt, floating downstream upon their mighty rivers, taking in a view of their politics, law, and administration, before venturing into the eternal night of the tomb, to behold the wonders of their afterlife realms.

It has never been my goal to make grand civilization-level comparisons; I have instead given preference to the historical “zoom lens” that reveals both broad cultural patterns as well as the details of material culture and the lives of individuals. I have also expressly tried to avoid the essentializing trap of claiming that “China is always like this” and “Egypt is always like that.” Such generalizations are nonexplanations, and they do more harm than good. But, even though this book is divided into seven fairly discrete case studies, we can still observe some common themes throughout. These themes reflect both strong parallel developments as well as equally conspicuous differences between the two cultures that can explain divergent historical outcomes.

Thus, we see that the early imperial Chinese state was largely successful at projecting its power far deeper into society, the economy, and the environment than was the pharaonic state in Egypt. Monarchs in both pharaonic Egypt and early imperial China connected their legitimacy to the maintenance of a harmonious natural world and the control of water resources. When the Nile ceased flooding in Egypt or when the Yellow River flooded disastrously in China, people lost faith in the ideology of kingship, and the state teetered on the brink of collapse. A key difference in the relationship between the states and their rivers was that China deployed its far greater power to mobilize labor for the dredging of massive canals and the construction of towering dikes to stop the Yellow River from changing its course, leading to an even larger population that put greater demands on agriculture. This projection of power led to a technological trap, for once these systems were built, they had to be maintained at ever-greater cost.

Later, we saw that even this greater economic power and labor mobilization of China could not overcome the limitation of distance, for both the Levantine empire of New Kingdom Egypt and the Central Asian empire of the Han were compelled to build networks of vassal states in those distant conquests, rather than deploy complete colonization and assimilation. Strong similarities were evident in the diplomatic systems used to maintain these empires and to communicate with neighboring peer polities, while a key difference in the

direction of diplomatic marriages could be explained by particular kinship practices.

The reforms of Akhenaten and Wang Mang followed a fundamentally similar trajectory of desanctifying the old order, before communicating and sanctifying their new orders. When the reforms failed, each man was vilified by his successors and removed from the legitimate succession. But the two reform programs were not equal in their focus, scale, or impact. While the average Egyptian might have noticed that the temples and festivals of the traditional gods were no longer patronized by the ruler, Akhenaten's reforms probably did not greatly impact the economic life of the majority of the population, unless they relied on the largesse formerly given to temple establishments, for New Kingdom Egypt's economy was less market driven than China's and based more on a redistributive model. Wang Mang's reforms, in contrast, greatly impacted the daily life of people across the empire, because he kept manipulating the crucial bronze coinage and caused price fluctuations in basic commodities with his economic schemes.

While legal principles of ancient Egypt and early China proclaimed a similar ideology of a divinely ordained ruler who maintained order in the cosmos by suppressing the forces of lawlessness, what each defined as crimes and how they maintained law and order differed markedly. Both legal systems punished infringement on royal tombs with the harshest penalties, but they diverged dramatically in their treatment of regular robbery and adultery. Egypt operated a "reactive" justice system that responded to complaints and tried to resolve most issues with community mediation and local village councils, with plaintiffs turning to oracles from the gods to resolve some sensitive cases. China deployed one of the most "proactive" legal systems seen in the ancient world, declaring that even small cases of theft, or adultery between consenting adults, were crimes to be prosecuted by the state. These were detailed in an enormous body of written statutes, enforced by a vast network of police and local court officials.

From these observations, we could conclude that the Chinese state was a much more developed form of a totalitarian bureaucratic monarchy than New Kingdom Egypt. One could fall back upon an essentialist argument to explain the difference and claim that this was evidence of a characteristically Chinese impulse toward despotic control over nature, economy, and society versus the more laissez-faire Egyptian approach. But many of the differences between the two systems were responses to historical circumstances rather than disparities stemming from cultural essentialism or environmental determinism. While differences in geographic scale, cultural diversity, and the precariousness of agricultural surplus might have been factors, the greater centralization and reach of political power in China were probably the response to the centuries-long interstate struggles of the Warring States period that ended with the unification of China in 221 BCE. That environment of constant life-or-death struggle created a perfect Darwinian storm of natural selection that favored the highly centralized, efficient, and intrusive bureaucratic state that orchestrated harsh and inflexible laws, built enormous waterworks to enhance agricultural productivity, and furnished a money economy with billions of coins. Egypt's initial centralization and unification in the late fourth millennium BCE was long in the past by the New Kingdom, and even the wars of unification against

the Hyksos around 1548 BCE that founded the Eighteenth Dynasty were fairly brief. Thus, the conditions for greater centralization of political and legal control were no longer really present in Egypt during the period covered by this book.

But in some ways that comparative explanation is oversimplified, and similar arguments have been presented before. For example, to explain why the state that arose in China at the close of the Warring States period was more centralized than the Roman state that arose on the Italian peninsula, Nathan Rosenstein has argued that during Rome's wars of expansion from the fifth to the third centuries BCE, it rarely faced the "long-term challenges that threatened states in China" and resorted more to alliance building and enlarging the citizenry to increase military capability, rather than the "intensification of extraction through an enlarged state apparatus."¹

And while earlier scholars have detailed how the conditions of total war during the Warring States period in China led to centralization of military, political, and fiscal power, especially in the state of Qin,² I would like to elaborate here on a specific institutional innovation of the Qin that made the greater centralization in China possible—that is, the creation of an abstract notion of the state, a government separate from the household of the ruler.

The pharaonic state in Egypt and the state-level polities in China before the Qin unification were all based upon a Weberian patrimonial model, in which the household formed the core social unit, and each larger unit in society was formed on the same principles, while encompassing the smaller units. Thus, the entire state became a "household of households," a nested fractal hierarchy in which patterns of kinship, patronage, and obligation within smaller structures were repeated at larger and larger scales.³ In such a system, there was no distinction between public and private sectors, for the state was viewed as an extension of the ruler's household. Thus, the Egyptian word pharaoh (*pr-ʿ3*), which literally means "the great house," indicates that the domain of ancient Egypt was viewed as an extension of the king's household.

In a state organized along these principles, it becomes difficult to centralize political or fiscal control beyond a certain point, because there are so many intermediate levels of patronage and obligation between the ruler and the individual. Indeed, during the more than three millennia of pharaonic civilization in Egypt, the state never broke out of this model. In contrast, during the remarkable third century BCE in China, the Qin state did abandon the patrimonial household model to create the first abstract notion of "the state" in world history.

Textual evidence for this momentous change comes in the form of a simple wooden board used by a scribe in the far south of the Qin Empire, later discarded in a well at the Liye site.⁴ Each of the more than fifty brief columns in the text prescribes edits to the language used in written documents, such as distinctions between variant graphs, proscriptions of tabooed words, and updates to official terminology. It was probably compiled by a local scribal official to serve as an aide-mémoire when producing official documents. The document carries no date, but the nature of the language changes it outlines most certainly dates to shortly after the unification of China in 221 BCE, when, according to Sima Qian, sweeping language reforms were codified. As such, it is our first piece of direct evidence for understanding the real nature of the so-

called unification of language carried out by the First Emperor.

For our purposes, the most important notations on the board consist of the following brief entries:

[Rather than] the “ducal house,” say “the government” (*gongshi*, *yue xianguan*)

[Rather than] the “royal house,” say “the government” (*wangshi*, *yue xianguan*)

The term, *gongshi* (literally, “house [or chamber] of the duke”) in the first entry refers to the noble household of the duke of Qin and originated during the period when the ruler of Qin was a duke (*gong*) in the Zhou system, namely between 777 and 338 BCE. It indicates that the domain was an extension of the ruler’s own household, and that the two were inseparable. The term seen in the second entry, *wangshi* (literally, “house [or chamber] of the king”) was likely coined during the period from 337 to 221 BCE when the ruler of Qin was called king (*wang*) and carries the same connotations as *gongshi*.

After 221 BCE, these terms were henceforth to be replaced in official documents with the compound that I translate as “the government” (*xianguan*), which literally means “the officers/offices of the central government located in the counties,” but in most usages refers “indiscriminately to organs of government, whether central or provincial, without any specification.”⁵ It is a neologism of the late third century BCE.

The new term *xianguan* was more abstract and impersonal than *gongshi* or *wangshi*, eliminating the connotations of private control by a ruling family and creating a more bureaucratic, depersonalized notion of the state. Concretely, in the Zhangjiashan legal texts from 186 BCE (quoted often in [chapter 4](#)) where the term *xianguan* appears frequently, materials, land, and livestock are accumulated, confiscated, and distributed by “the government,” not the ruler; rewards in cash are given by “the government,” not the imperial family; and labor is conscripted by “the government,” not the emperor.

Certainly, the royal house still persisted in China for the next two millennia, but it was now mostly separate from the bureaucratic state. This new state was capable of greater centralization than the old patrimonial state, because even though it was still comprised of multiple levels, nested in a fractal hierarchy (village, township, county, commandery, and central government), power and fiscal relations in this hierarchy were no longer based on patronage and kinship, but on rationalized bureaucratic roles, accountability, and precision. Étienne Balazs argued that this self-perpetuating bureaucratic machine became the backbone of continuity for the Chinese state, persevering through changes in individual rulers or even dynasties.⁶ Such a depersonalized notion of government comes very late to Western European countries, many of which were still ruled through nepotism and favoritism, as extensions of a ruling family, until the eighteenth century and beyond.

Unexpected parallels are also apparent between ancient Egypt and early China in both the conception of the soul and the nature of the afterlife transition, as well as the material and visual expression of those. For example, similar methods and materials were employed by scribes to express their group identity, including elaborate writing kits and a curriculum that instilled a scribal group consciousness. These expressions persisted into the tomb, as

scribes marked their occupational identity through the inclusion of these materials within the crypt. An important difference was that a Chinese scribe tended to express his personal and occupational identity with only his tools, his name, and his texts, whereas the Egyptian scribe supplemented these with visual representations of himself. A comparable phenomenon is evident wherein nonscribal elites in each society co-opted cultural markers of scribes to express their own notions of literacy and temporal authority.

In both China and Egypt, the deceased were provided for in the afterlife through the use of models and figurines, stimulated by a common anxiety about the perceived physical needs of the dead. Through the use of certain qualities of the physical materials, scale, and framing, those who arranged these funerary displays were also able to extend hierarchies of value and status into the afterlife and construct a model universe out of objects that were even more effective than the real thing. These models were deployed by similar classes in each culture, from minor officials on upward to elites and rulers, but among the lower ranks, there was a tendency to project an aspirational standard of living, with more servants than they actually commanded in life.

Both cultures also developed notions of lush, paradisiacal realms, reserved for the worthy and pious deceased, where entrance could also be facilitated by a fateful turn of the dice in board games with cosmic, allegorical meaning. The state and its bureaucracy exerted a marked influence on these afterlife realms, where the deceased were required to pass through numerous gates, checkpoints, and borders to arrive in paradise.

Another structural similarity between the afterlife beliefs of ancient Egypt and early China that I did not have the opportunity to pursue deeply in the preceding chapters concerns the relationship between the living and the souls of the dead. If we were to read only elite Chinese ritual texts or the inscriptions on bronze ritual vessels, we might assume that the souls of the ancestors were all respected and well-tended and frequently bestowed benefits on their descendants. Similarly, we might assume that in Egypt all people welcomed the *ba* souls of the dead, who wandered the world of the living during the day, walking among ordinary people.

However, in both cultures, the disparate genres of spells, tomb texts, letters to the underworld, medical texts, and popular tales tell a different story. In Egypt, people largely distrusted the dead, especially those who met violent ends or did not receive proper burial, and wrote magical spells to protect against their potential malevolence. Some people even wrote letters directly addressed to the dead, seeking their help, but also blaming them for misfortune.⁷ Similarly in China, from at least the Warring States period, the dead, especially those who died violently, were viewed with great ambivalence and even fear. Magical spells and medical exorcisms were employed to protect the living from their influence. The deceased were likely provided with tombs imitating residences filled with provisions in order to pacify them, and given travel paraphernalia to eventually take them far away from a populace who distrusted their power.⁸

While I hope that these case studies have contributed something toward the goal of illuminating and understanding each culture through comparative analysis, bringing out their texture and flavor, there are many more points of comparison that could be explored by intrepid scholars.

An obvious piece of low-hanging fruit would be a comparative study of the ideology of kingship in Egypt and China, as well as an evaluation of monumental royal tombs. In the realm of social and economic history, much could be learned from comparative analyses of the roles of women, gender and sexuality, royal harem culture, different forms of coerced labor, the nature of urbanism, or artisans and craft production. In the realm of military history, one could compare the military logistics, battle strategies, and the role of technological innovations in imperial expansion. And while the phenomenon of the hybrid nature of conquest states in former imperial cores has been studied separately for each civilization, it would be interesting to examine it through a cross-cultural analysis, such as comparing the Xianbei-led Northern Wei dynasty (386–534 CE) in China with the Libyan Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Dynasties (ca. 962–725 BCE) or Nubian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (770–656 BCE) of Egypt. Much more could also be explored in the domain of comparative ritual and religion, including a study of forms of divination. The history of technology in Egypt and China is each a well-developed field, but they have not been in dialogue with each other. This could be remedied with comparative studies of nautical and vehicle technology, metalworking, and natural and artificial pigments. And finally, in the realm of literature, it might be fruitful to look comparatively at the genre of wisdom literature in both cultures as well as the remnants of orality that remained in early written culture.



Plate 1. Mace Head of King Scorpion, Early Dynastic period, ca. 3050 BCE. Carved limestone, H 31 cm, W 30 cm, Hierakonpolis, Egypt. Ashmolean Museum, AN 1896-1908 E.3632. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, reproduced with permission.



Plate 2. Ramesses III before Hapy enthroned, New Kingdom, Twentieth Dynasty, reign of Ramesses III (r. ca. 1195–1164 BCE). Carved and painted limestone with plaster, mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, Luxor, Egypt. © AGE Fotostock, Photo by Gian Carlo Patarino.



Plate 3. Silver jug with goat handle, inscribed for Atumemtanab, Egypt or Levant, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1290–1224 BCE. Silver, with gold rim and handle, H 16.8 cm, from the site of Tell Basta (Bubastis), Egypt. Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 38705 and 39867, CG 53262, SR1/6609), photo courtesy of Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Photography by Ahmed Amin.



Plate 4. Relief of Akhenaten and family under the Aten, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1345 BCE. Limestone, H 33.5 cm, W 39.5 cm, unknown provenance, Tell el-Amarna, Egypt. Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin, ÄM 14145, Art Resource, NY.



Plate 5. Akhenaten sacrificing a duck, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1345 BCE. Painted limestone, H 24.5 cm, W 54.5 cm, D 7 cm, probably from Hermopolis, and originally from Tell el-Amarna, Egypt. MMA, 1985.328.2, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

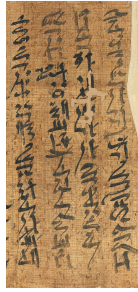


Plate 6a. *Tale of Sinuhe*, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, reign of Amenemhat IV, ca. 1822–1812 BCE. Ink on papyrus, unknown provenance, Egypt. Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin, P 3022, Art Resource, NY.



Plate 6b. *Laozi*, Western Han period, ca. 168 BCE. Black and red ink on silk, from tomb no. 3, Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan, China. Photo courtesy of Hunan Provincial Museum.



Plate 7. Funeral procession, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1350 BCE. Painted limestone, tomb of Ramose (TT55), Luxor, Egypt. Photo by Anthony Barbieri-Low, March 14, 2015.



Plate 8. Servant grinding grain, Old Kingdom, Fifth Dynasty, ca. 2400–2350 BCE. Painted limestone, H 19.4 cm, probably from Giza, Egypt. MMA, 1979.403, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 9. Granary with scribes, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty ca. 1990–1980 BCE. Wood, plaster, paint, linen, grain, L 74.9, W 56 cm, H 36.5; average height of figures: 20 cm; tomb of Meketre (TT280, MMA 1101), Southern Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. MMA 20.3.11, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 10. Residence with garden, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1990–1980 BCE). Wood, paint, copper, L 84.4 cm, W 42.5 cm, H 39.5 cm; tomb of Meketre (TT280, MMA 1101), Southern Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. MMA 20.3.13, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 11. Bakery and brewery, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1990–1980 BCE). Wood, gesso, paint, linen, L 73 cm, W 55 cm, H 29 cm, average height of figures: 21 cm; tomb of Meketre (TT280, MMA 1101), Southern Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. MMA 20.3.12, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 12. Offering-bearer representing an estate, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1990–1980 BCE). Wood, gesso, paint, H 112 cm, W 17 cm, D 46.7 cm, tomb of Meketre (TT280, MMA 1101), Southern Asasif, Thebes, Egypt. MMA 20.3.7, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 13. Procession of offering-bearers, Middle Kingdom, late Eleventh Dynasty–early Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 2040–1961 BCE. Wood, L 66.4 cm, W 8.6 cm, H 42.5 cm, tomb of Djehutynakht and his consort (tomb no. 10, shaft A), Deir el-Bersha, Egypt. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession no. 21.326, photograph © 2020 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Plate 14. Carpentry shop, Middle Kingdom, late Eleventh Dynasty–early Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 2040–1961 BCE. Wood, copper (copper-headed saw restored from example in tomb no. 10, shaft B), W 18 cm, H 27.5 cm, D 23 cm, tomb of Djehutynakht and his consort (tomb no. 10, shaft A), Deir el-Bersha, Egypt. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession no. 21.412, photograph © 2020 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Plate 15. Figurines from the Tomb of Lady Dai, Western Han period, ca. 168 BCE. Tomb no. 1, Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan, China. (a) Musicians with model string and wind instruments, painted wood, bamboo, string, H 32.5–38 cm; (b) Serving girl, painted magnolia wood, with silk clothing, H 73 cm; (c) chamberlain, inscribed "capped man," H 79 cm, W 19 cm at shoulders. Hunan Provincial Museum, photos courtesy of Hunan Provincial Museum.



Plate 16. Terracotta Army pit no. 1, Qin dynasty, ca. 210 BCE. Museum of the Qin Emperor's Terracotta Warriors and Horses, Lintong District, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China. Photo by Anthony Barbieri-Low, August 4, 2005.



Plate 17. Vignette from *Book of the Dead* of Nebqed, New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1389–1349 BCE. L 6 m, H 31 cm, Thebes, Egypt. Musée du Louvre, N3068, Art Resource, NY.



Plate 18. Vignette to Coffin Text spell 466, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1900 BCE. Wood with painted decoration and text, coffin of Seni, Deir el-Bersha, Egypt. British Museum, EA30842. © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.



Plate 19. "Marsh of Reeds" from *Book of the Dead* of Ani, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1250 BCE. Painted papyrus, L 70 cm (frame), W 42.2 cm (frame), from the tomb of Ani, Thebes, Egypt. British Museum, EA10470, 35. © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.



Plate 20. East wall of the tomb of Sennedjem, New Kingdom, Nineteenth Dynasty, ca. 1280 BCE. Paint on plaster, W 2.61 m, H 2.40 m, Theban tomb no. 1 (TT1), Deir el-Medina, Egypt. © IFAO.

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

Ai Zhang 哀章 (d. 23 CE)

An Han Gong 安漢公 Duke Giving Tranquility to the Han Dynasty

Bai Qi 白起 (ca. 332–257 BCE)

baizhi 白雉 white pheasant

Bajiaolang 八角廊 royal tomb site in Hebei

ban 版 wooden board

Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE)

bi 筆 brush

biao 表 tables

bing Tianxia 并 (併) 天下 to combine all [the lands] under Heaven

Bing Yi 冰夷 legendary person

bo 帛 roll of plain silk

busi 不死 deathlessness

buxiao 不孝 filial impiety

cang 倉 granary

Cangjie pian 倉頡篇 *Bamboo Bundles of Cangjie*

ce 冊 booklet, document

ce 策 document

Chang'an 長安 Long-Lasting Peace (Han imperial capital)

Chang'an 常安 Perpetual Peace (Xin Imperial capital)

chanyu 單于 title of Xiongnu leader

Chengxiang 丞相 chief minister

Chuci 楚辭 *Elegies of Chu*

ci 刺 greeting tablet

“**Ci lǚ**” 祠律 “Statutes on Sacrifices”

cuanwei 篡位 to usurp the throne

Da Chanyu 大單于 Great Chanyu of the Xiongnu

Dai 軹 Han marquisate in Hunan

Daliang 大梁 capital of Wei kingdom

dao 刀 knife

dao 盜 robbery

“**Dao lǚ**” 盜律 “Statutes on Robbery”

daobi li 刀筆吏 knife and brush officials

Dasima 大司馬 general-in-chief

Dayuan 大宛 ancient polity in Ferghana valley

Deshui 德水 River of Power (i.e., Yellow River)

Di 帝 High God

di 弟 younger brother

die 牒 bamboo or wooden slips

ding 鼎 tripod

Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BCE)

Dou Wan 竇綰 (d. ca. 113 BCE)

du 牘 wooden board

Dujiangyan 都江堰 hydraulic work in Sichuan

duwei 都尉 commandant

fa 法 categorical legal principle

Fa Cao 法曹 Legal Bureau

Faliu dawen 法律答問 *Answers to Questions on Legal Principles and Statutes*

fang 方 wooden board

fang 釭 square-sided ritual vessel for wine

fanzui 反罪 reversal of crime

Feng Yi 馮夷 legendary person

Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義 *Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores*

Fengzhen shi 封診式 *Models for Sealing and Physical Examinations*

fu 服 confession, submission

gong 公 duke

Gong Cao 功曹 Bureau of Merit

gongshi 公室 ducal house

gongshi, yue xianguan 公室，曰縣官 [Rather than] “the ducal house,” say “the government”

gu yu ren 古玉人 antique jade man

Gu Yung 谷永 (d. 8 BCE)

guan 管 sheath or brush-case

guangdi 廣地 broadening the land

guannei hou 關內侯 interior marquis

guanren 冠人 capped man

guanzuo 官佐 office assistant

Han 漢 dynasty

Han 韓 Warring States polity

Han shu 漢書 *History of the Han*

He 河 Yellow River (lit., “River”)

He 河 Spiritual Power of the Yellow River

He Bo 河伯 Earl of the Yellow River

He Shen 河神 Yellow River Spirit

heqin 和親 peace through kinship alliance

Hexi 河西 territories west of the Yellow River

hou 侯 marquis

hu hou 戶後 heir to the household

Huainanzi 淮南子 *Master of Huainan*

Huan 洹 Huan River

Huangdi 黃帝 Yellow Emperor

Huanghe 黃河 Yellow River

Huangquan 黃泉 Yellow Springs

Huangzhi 黃支 ancient polity near Bengal

Huayuantou 花園口 place in Henan

hun 魂 spirit soul

Huo Qubing 霍去病 (140–117 BCE)

Huzi 瓠子 place in Henan

ji 紀 annals

Jia Huangdi 假皇帝 temporary emperor

jian 奸 illicit intercourse

jian 簡 bamboo slip

jiao shang 校 (交) 上 in the act of sexual intercourse
jiarenzi 家人子 a child of the [imperial] household
jie 節 staff of authority of envoy
Jijiu pian 急就篇 *Bamboo Bundles for Rapid Attainment*
jimi 羈縻 loose rein form of sovereignty
jin 金 metal
Jing 涇 Jing River
Jingtu 淨土 Pure Land
jisi yi he 計筭一合 one lidded basket for calculation
“**Jiuge**” 九歌 “Nine Songs”
jiuzhang 鳩杖 dove-finish staff
jiwei 即位 to approach the throne
jun 郡 commandery
Jushe 居攝 Occupying the Regency

kou 寇 marauder
kundi 昆弟 older and younger brothers
kunmo 昆莫 Wusun leader

lang 郎 gentleman of the palace
langzhong 郎中 gentleman of the interior
Li Bing 李冰 (mid 3rd c. BCE)
Li Erlang 李二郎 (late 3rd c. BCE)
Li Guangli 李廣利 (d. ca. 89 BCE)
lingshi 令史 scribe director
Liu 劉 surname of the Han royal house
Liu Che 劉徹 (156–87 BCE)
Liu Jian 劉建 (r. 127–121 BCE)
Liu Jieyou 劉解憂 (121–49 BCE)
Liu Jing 劉敬 (fl. ca. 202–198 BCE)
Liu Qi 劉啟 (188–141 BCE)
Liu Sheng 劉勝 (d. 113 BCE)
Liu Wu 劉戊 (r. 174–154 BCE)
Liu Xijun 劉細君 (d. ca. 101 BCE)
Liu Xiu 劉脩 (r. 69–54 BCE)
liubo 六博 “six sticks” game
lu 虜 captive
Lü Gongzi 呂公子 legendary person
Lu Jia 陸賈 (ca. 228–140 BCE)
luan 亂 chaos and disorder
Lunyu 論語 *Analects of Confucius*
Luo 洛 Luo River
Luoyang 洛陽

Mang 莽
Man-Yi dazhang laofu chen Tuo 蠻夷大長老夫臣佗 your aged subject, Tuo, a barbarian chief
Maodun 冒頓 (r. ca. 209–174 BCE)
miezu 滅族 exterminate the entire family
Min 岷 Min River
mingqi 明器 spirit vessels
mo 墨 ink

Nangzhiyasi 囊知牙斯 (r. 8 BCE–13 CE)
Nanyue 南越 kingdom south of Han China
Nülangshan 女郎山 site in Shandong

pian 篇 bundles of writings
pifu 匹夫 average man
po 魄 corporeal soul

qiewei 竊位 to steal the throne
Qin Ling Gong 秦靈公 Duke Ling of Qin (r. 424–415 BCE)
Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝 First Emperor of Qin (r. 246–210 BCE)
qing 情 truth, the facts of the matter
qishi 棄市 casting away in the marketplace
qun 囷 cylindrical granary

Ren An 任安 (d. ca 91 BCE)
Rong Fei 容妃 (d. 1788 CE)

san 散 scattered ones
shangji 上計 forwarding of accounts
Shangshu 尚書 *Book of Documents*
Shanhaijing 山海經 *Classic of Mountains and Seas*
shaoli 少吏 junior officials
sheng 勝 type of crown
shengyu 乘輿 for imperial use
shi 史 scribe
shi 食 eating
Shi ji 史記 *Records of the Grand Scribe*
Shi Rao 師饒 (d. ca. 10 BCE)
“**Shihuo zhi**” 食貨志 “Treatise on Food and Money”
shijiang 史匠 scribal craftsmen
shizhe 使者 envoy
shu 書 written documents
shu 屬 attaché
shudao 書刀 book knife
shuguo 屬國 dependent states
Shuihudi 睡虎地 site in Hubei
Shundi 舜帝 Emperor Shun
shuzu 戍卒 garrison conscript
Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE)
Sui 遂 (d. ca. 167 BCE)

Taizhong Daifu 太中大夫 grand councilor of the palace
Tian Fen 田蚡 (d. 131 BCE)
Tian suo li 天所立 established by Heaven
Tiandi 天帝 Heavenly Thearch
Tian-Di suosheng ri yue suozhi 天地所生日月所置 born of Heaven and the Earth, and installed by the Sun and the Moon
tianma 天馬 heavenly horses
Tianmen 天門 Gate of Heaven
“**Tianwen**” 天問 “Heavenly Questions”
Tianxia 天下 All under Heaven (i.e., China)
Ting Wei 廷尉 commandant of the court

wadang 瓦當 roof tile endcaps
wang 王 king
Wang Ben 王賁 (late 3rd c. BCE)
Wang Chong 王充 (ca. 27–ca. 100 CE)
Wang Mang Jiumiao 王莽九 Nine Ancestral Temples of Wang Mang
wangshi 王室 royal house

wangshi, yue xianguan 王室，曰縣官 [Rather than] “the royal house,” say “the government”

weishi 尉史 commandant's scribe

Wendi 文帝 Emperor Wen (r. 180–157 BCE)

wenming 溫明 soul warmer

wu 伍 mutual responsibility group of five

Wudi 武帝 Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 BCE)

Wuse shisheng 五色食勝 *The Five Colored Pieces Eat Their Way to Victory*

wushu 物疏 tomb inventory

wuxing zhi tu 無行之徒 immoral men

Wuyingshan 無影山 site in Shandong

Xi 喜 “Happy” (d. ca. 216 BCE)

xi 璽 imperial seal

xian 縣 county

Xiang Fei 香妃 Fragrant Concubine

Xiangfei 襄賁 Han county

xianguan 縣官 the government

xiangju 相距（拒） confrontation, skirmish

xianling quanshu 先令券書 written contract tally of directives prior [to decease]

xiao 梟 owl

Xiao Wu Huangdi 孝武皇帝 Filial and Martial Emperor (r. 140–87 BCE)

xiashu 下書 “[he] sent down a written document”

Xihai anding 西海安定 Xihai is settled and at peace

Ximen Bao 西門豹 (fl. ca. 400 BCE)

Xin 新 dynasty

Xindu Hou 新都侯 Marquis of Xindu

xiong 兄 older brother

xiongdi 兄弟 brothers

Xiwangmu 西王母 Queen Mother of the West

Xiyu 西域 Western Regions

Xiyu Duhu 西域都護 protector general of the Western Regions

xue 削 scraper

xue'er 學伋 study mentor

Yan 鄆 city in Chu

yan 硯 inkstone

Yang Yun 楊惲 (d. 54 BCE)

Yangling 陽陵 imperial mausoleum of Emperor Jing

Yanqi 焉耆 Karasahr

Yantie lun 鹽鐵論 *Discourses on Salt and Iron*

yanzi 硯子 pestle

ye 謁 greeting tablet

Ye 鄴 city in Henan

yin 陰 female energy

Ying Shao 應劭 (ca. 140–206 CE)

Yuanyan 元延 era (12–9 BCE)

Yueshang 越裳 foreign group southwest of China

yushi 獄史 judiciary scribe

Yushi Dafu 御史大夫 chief prosecutor

Yuzhuang 于莊 site in Henan

zei 賊 malicious harm

zha 札 bamboo or wooden slips

zhang 章 seal of an official

Zhang Anshi 張安世 (d. 62 BCE)

Zhang Qian 張騫 (d. 113 BCE)
Zhang Shizhi 張釋之 (fl. ca. 180–150 BCE)
zhao 詔 imperial instruction
Zhao Tuo 趙佗 (d. 137 BCE)
zhe 磔 being carved into pieces with exposure of the corpse
Zheng Guo 鄭國 (fl. ca. 300 BCE)
Zhengguo Qu 鄭國渠 Zhengguo Canal
zhi 志 treatise
zhi 制 imperial decision
Zhi 知 given name of one Xiongnu leader
Zhonghang Yue 中行說 (fl. ca. 179–159 BCE)
Zhongshan Huai Wang 中山懷王 Regional Lord Huai of Zhongshan (r. 69–54 BCE)
Zhongshan Jing Wang 中山靖王 Regional Lord Jing of Zhongshan (d. 113 BCE)
Zhouli 周禮 *Rituals of the Zhou*
zhuan 傳 traditions, biography
Zhuangzi 莊子 *Master Zhuang*
zhuhou wang 諸侯王 regional lords
zongshi nü wengzhu 宗室女翁主 princess of the imperial house
Zou Yan 鄒衍 (d. ca. 240 BCE)
Zouyan shu 奏讞書 *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases*
zuo 佐 assistants
zuo 坐 liability

GLOSSARY OF EGYPTIAN NAMES AND TERMS

MEMPHIS


ive spirit)

zon)

sonal name)


r

storehouses of the estate


puy (personal name)

ry off, to lead away as booty

ive


s, falsehood)

name)

oden writing board

of the town

roll

rsonal name)







cupbearer






yn to all foreign lands

sonal name)

ul)










 oh (lit., the great house)
 of goodness (i.e., embalming facility)
 s
 (book title)
 ndicated
 l justice, order, and stability)







 personal name)
 anal (asterism)
 nal name)

















 s
 lical foreverness)





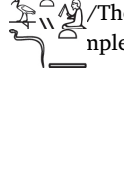

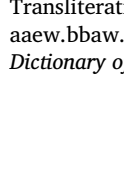



 Upper and Lower Egypt
 on



 personal name)
 n the wood (i.e., to impale)
 nce, mayor

 r)
 rfe
 wife
 rulers of foreign lands)


 : [a tomb]
 d name)
 vo Lands
 h of calamities
 d game


 te
 tomb
 ace of truth
 frontier
 lemon)
 Offerings
 sleep [with]

 onfuse, to comingle
 fuse, to comingle
 (personal name)
 (ul)
 (personal name)
 (title)
 k Land (i.e., Egypt)
 lette
 of Pharaoh—life, prosperity, and health
 (personal name)
 aneb (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)
 (personal name)

Transliteration and word order following Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae (TLA) <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/index.html>, with some modifications, based on Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Poo, *Enemies of Civilization*, 12–13; Levine, “Is Comparative History Possible?”; Sivin, “Why Some Comparisons Make More Difference,” 36.
- 2 For a graph showing the increasing number of comparative ancient history publications, see Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 49, fig. 2.1.
- 3 Shankman and Durrant, *Early China/Ancient Greece*, 6.
- 4 The statement that “history can do more than study walled gardens” was made by Fernand Braudel, *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, 1:22. For the role of comparative history in combating overspecialization, see Lloyd and Sivin, *Way and the Word*, 8.
- 5 This lament was expressed by Trigger, “Egyptology and Anthropology,” 29–30.
- 6 Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 41.
- 7 Poo, *Enemies of Civilization*, 14–15, refers to these two approaches as the “comparative perspective” approach and the “comprehensive comparative” approach.
- 8 Scheidel, “Introduction” in *State Power*, 3; Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 42; Levine, “Is Comparative History Possible?,” 336.
- 9 Lloyd, “Introduction: Methods, Problems, and Prospects,” 25–26.
- 10 See Levine, “Is Comparative History Possible?,” 333, 343–45.
- 11 Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 41; Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion*, 53–60.
- 12 Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 43.
- 13 Skocpol and Somers, “Uses of Comparative History,” 174–97.
- 14 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 4.
- 15 Skocpol, *States and Revolutions*.
- 16 Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*.
- 17 Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 45.
- 18 Levine, “Is Comparative History Possible?,” 333.
- 19 See Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation*, vol. 2. The number of citations comes from Shankman and Durrant, *Siren and the Sage*, 4.
- 20 First formulated in Needham, *Grand Titration*.
- 21 For a review and bibliography of Lloyd’s work and Sino-Hellenic comparisons in general, see Tanner, “Ancient Greece and Early China.”
- 22 Lloyd and Sivin, *Way and the Word*. See Lloyd, *Demystifying Mentalities*; Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities*; Lloyd *Ambitions of Curiosity*.
- 23 Tanner, “Ancient Greece and Early China,” 94–95.
- 24 Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*; Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han*. See also Hall and Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*.
- 25 Shankman and Durrant, *Siren and The Sage*. The two scholars sponsored a conference in 1998, which led to the publication of *Early China/Ancient Greece*.
- 26 Raphals, *Knowing Words*; Raphals, *Divination and Prediction*; Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners*.
- 27 See I-tien Hsing (Xing Yitian), “Rome and China.” Several of Hsing’s later articles also engaged in Rome and China comparisons. S. A. M. Adshead delivered an incisive list of

similarities and differences between the Han and Roman empires in his textbook, *China in World History*, 4–21.

28 The book was based on a conference held in 2005.

29 For the mission statement of the project, see <https://web.stanford.edu/~scheidel/acme.htm>.

30 Scheidel, *Rome and China*, 6.

31 Beck and Vankeerberghen, *Rulers and Ruled in Ancient Greece, Rome, and China*.

32 Wittfogel, “Die Theorie der orientalischen Gesellschaft”; Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*.

33 Steward, “Cultural Causality and Law.”

34 Eisenstadt, *Political Systems of Empires*.

35 Trigger, “Egyptology and Anthropology”; Trigger, *Ancient Civilizations*; Trigger, “Ancient Egypt in Cross-Cultural Perspective”; Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*.

36 The article “Building World Orders in Ancient China and Egypt: Tianxia and Maat” by Juan Carlos Moreno Garcia and Yuri Pines was not published in time for me to consult for this introductory survey.

37 www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/er/institutions.html lists all the institutions.

38 Scheidel, “Comparing Comparisons,” 48.

39 See, for example, Baines, “Civilizations and Empires.”

40 Contemporaneity is one of the main reasons Mutschler and Mittag chose to compare early imperial China and Rome. See *Conceiving the Empire*, xiv. Scheidel is not one of these scholars, for in “Comparing Comparisons” (43), he comments that “the less close and connected they are, the better. Distance suppresses interaction effects, thereby stimulating causal analysis.”

41 Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 35–37, 46.

CHAPTER 1: THE LANDSCAPES OF THE NILE AND YELLOW RIVER

1 The most developed treatment is Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*. For an early version, see Wittfogel, “Die Theorie der orientalischen Gesellschaft.” An accessible overview is Wittfogel, “Hydraulic Civilizations.” For the origins of Wittfogel’s ideas, see Ulmen, *Science of Society*.

2 For analysis of Wittfogel’s theory with other “prime mover” models for state formation, see Flannery, “Cultural Evolution”; Wright, “Toward an Explanation.”

3 Adams, *Land Behind Baghdad*; Carneiro, “Origin of the State,” 734; Ho, “Loess.”

4 Steward, “Initiation of a Research Trend,” 4.

5 Butzer, “Irrigation,” 184.

6 Steward, “Initiation of a Research Trend,” 13.

7 For the geology and geography of the Nile, see Said, *Geological Evolution*; Jeffreys, “Nile Valley,” 7–14; Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*; Butzer, “Nile,” 543–51.

8 Butzer, “Nile,” 545.

9 Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 17.

10 Butzer, “Nile,” 547.

11 For the history of Nile flooding, see Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 27–30; Butzer, “Nile Flood Variation,” 102–12; Seidlmayer, *Nilstände*.

12 See Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 33–36; Hillier, Bunbury, and Graham, “Migrating Nile,” 1011–15. See also Graham and Bunbury, “Ancient Landscapes,” 17–19. For river migration near Memphis, see Jeffreys, *Survey of Memphis*.

13 Jeffreys, “Nile Valley,” 12.

14 Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 29.

15 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 18–19.

16 Wilson, “Nature of the Universe,” 35–43.

17 Wilson, “Nature of the Universe,” 33, 37. Poo, *Enemies of Civilization*, 26–27.

18 Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 20–22.

19 This section relies on Zhang, *The River*, 22–38; Pietz, *Yellow River*, 10–20; Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:220–25.

20 Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, 29.1697. This figure is high for the main river, which in the twentieth

- century was approximately 40 percent silt, but tributaries could be as high as 70 percent.
- 21 Pietz, *Yellow River*, 19.
 - 22 For Yellow River course changes, see Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:239–47, table 69; and Zhang, *The River*, 25, 27–38.
 - 23 Zhang, *The River*, 27–38; Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:239–47.
 - 24 For accessible overviews, see Kidder, Liu, and Li, “Sanyangzhuang”; Kidder, “Sanyangzhuang.” For a detailed account, see Kidder et al., “Alluvial Geoarchaeology.”
 - 25 Kidder, “Alluvial Geoarchaeology,” 333.
 - 26 The site is dated by the presence of bronze *huoquan* coins, which circulated during the Wang Mang period, but only from 14 CE. Accounts in the *Han shu* indicate massive Yellow River dike breaks between 3 and 5 CE, and in 11 CE. It does not record a break between 14 and 17 CE.
 - 27 Keightley, “Religious Commitment,” 223.
 - 28 Poo, *Personal Welfare*.
 - 29 Pines, “Changing Views of *tianxia*”; Moreno Garcia and Pines, “Building World Orders.”
 - 30 It rains about 100–200 mm annually in the Delta.
 - 31 Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 43.
 - 32 See line drawing in Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 21, fig. 2.
 - 33 Jeffreys, “Nile Valley,” 8; Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 43, 50.
 - 34 Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 20, 47. For the basin system during the nineteenth century, see Lehner, “Fractal House,” 298–305, 314–15.
 - 35 Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 46–47.
 - 36 See Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:217.
 - 37 Ho, “Loess”; Zhao Zhijun, “Yangshao wenhua.”
 - 38 Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 6.2:106.
 - 39 Storozum et al., “Key Evidence of Irrigation Technology.”
 - 40 Wilkinson, *Royal Annals*.
 - 41 Jaritz, “Nilmesser”; Borchardt, “Nilmesser”; Seidlmayer, *Nilstände*.
 - 42 Zhang, *The River*, 27.
 - 43 Needham, *Science and Civilization*, 4.3:234–37, 249; Zhang, *The River*, 119–20; Pietz, *Yellow River*, 44–45.
 - 44 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 29.1409, 1412–13; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:55, 57–59.
 - 45 Pietz, *Yellow River*, 40, 61.
 - 46 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 29.1407; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:54; Chang Qu, *Huayang guozhi*, 132–33.
 - 47 Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:288–96.
 - 48 As quoted in Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 29.1407–8n6. See interpretation in Sage, *Ancient Sichuan*, 148–52.
 - 49 Sichuan Guanxian Wenjiaoju, “Dujiangyan,” 27–28.
 - 50 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 29.1408; Translated in Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:54–55.
 - 51 Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3:285–87.
 - 52 Walters, *Water for Larsa*.
 - 53 Li Daoyuan, *Shuijing zhu jiao*, 908.
 - 54 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 6.234.
 - 55 Pietz, *Yellow River*, 104–8; Muscolino, *Ecology of War*.
 - 56 This summary is based upon Römer, “Nile in the Fayum”; Hassan, “A River Runs through Egypt”; Hassan and Tassie, “Modelling Environmental and Settlement Changes”; Hassan et al., “Holocene Geoarchaeology.”
 - 57 Smith, *Following Osiris*, 449–52.
 - 58 Frankfort, *Kingship*, 103–4.
 - 59 Translation from Černý, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 85.
 - 60 Frankfort, *Kingship*, 57–60.
 - 61 Bell, “Dark Ages,” 20.
 - 62 Butzer, “Nile Flood Variation,” 107–8, 110.

- 63 Lewis, *Flood Myths*.
- 64 For Dong Zhongshu's memorials, see Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 56.2495–2526; Loewe, *Dong Zhongshu*, 86–182.
- 65 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 29.2327. Translation by Anthony Barbieri-Low.
- 66 Bell, “Dark Ages”; Butzer, “Nile Flood Variation,” 106–9; For the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*, see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:149–62; Enmarch, *A World Upturned*.
- 67 Hassan, “A River Runs through Egypt”; Hassan, “Fall of the Egyptian Old Kingdom”; Stanley et al., “Nile Flow Failure.”
- 68 For the so-called 4,200 BP climatic event, as seen in Mesopotamia, see Weiss et al., “Genesis and Collapse”; Cullen et al., “Climate Change.” For a skeptical review of the evidence, see Moeller, “First Intermediate Period”; Voosen, “Massive Drought or Myth?”
- 69 Bielenstein, “Wang Mang,” 240–45.
- 70 The course changes during the Song did weaken the regime and made it easier prey for the Jurchen invasion of 1126 CE.
- 71 This identification was first made in Qu Wanli, “He zi yi yi.”
- 72 Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 5n16.
- 73 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, 10076; transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 239.2; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 113, no. 149.
- 74 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, no. 33337; transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 748.2; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 14, no. 12B.
- 75 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, nos. 41867, 7854f; transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 957.2, 196.1; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 114, nos. 150AB, 151AB.
- 76 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, no. 10405b; transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 248.1; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 92, no. 126.
- 77 Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 4–5.
- 78 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, no. 5522 (recto); transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 137.2; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 114, no. 152.
- 79 See rubbing in Guo Moruo and Hu Houxuan, *Jiaguwen*, no. 5158B; transcribed in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu*, p. 130.1; translated in Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 114, no. 154.
- 80 Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 119.
- 81 Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 119.
- 82 Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition*, 3:1866–67 (Duke Ai 6). A Yellow River Spirit (He Shen) is also mentioned in 632 BCE, as appearing to the Chu minister in a dream before a major battle, demanding a sacrifice. The minister refused and was subsequently defeated. See Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition*, 1:422–23.
- 83 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 126.3211 (commentary). Other texts claim his name was Lü Gongzi and that his wife was Feng Yi. See Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 28.1373 (commentary).
- 84 As quoted in *Shi ji*, 28.1373 (commentary). In that citation, his name is written Bing Yi.
- 85 Hawkes, *Songs*, 113–15; For the Chinese text, see Wang Yi, *Chuci jiaoshi*, 161–65.
- 86 The location of the bridal bed launching was still celebrated and recorded in the sixth century CE. See Li Daoyuan, *Shuijing zhu jiao*, 351–52.
- 87 See story in Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 126.3211–3213. Lai, “Looking for Mr. Ho Po,” views the historical account as covering up an ancient myth.
- 88 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 15.705.
- 89 Wang Xianqian, *Zhuangzi jijie*, juan 3:18a–27b; Watson, *Zhuangzi*, 126–38.
- 90 For the Chinese text, see Wang Yi, *Chuci jiaoshi*, 161–65; translated in Hawkes, *Songs*, 113–15; Waley, *Nine Songs*, 47–52.
- 91 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 6.238; 28.1366.
- 92 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 28.1372; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 28A.1545.
- 93 For foundational studies, see Buck, “Meaning of the Name H’PJ,” 1–22; Baines, *Fecundity Figures*; Bonneau, *La Crue du Nil*.

- 94 For these two conceptions of time, see Assmann, *Search for God*, 77.
- 95 Akhenaten was not threatened by the continued worship of Hapy, and was even addressed as Hapy in royal propaganda, demonstrating that Hapy was not a god in the traditional sense.
- 96 See Baines, *Fecundity Figures*.
- 97 See original texts in Buck and Gardiner, *Coffin Texts*, 4:143 lines a–b, 144 lines k–l; For translations, see Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 1:240–49, spell nos. 319–20.
- 98 For a critical edition of the text, see Helck, *Der Text des “Nilhymnus”*; van der Plas, *L’hymne à la crue du Nil*; For translations, see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:204–210; Foster, “Thought Couplets.” For another analysis, see Assmann, “Nilhymnus.”
- 99 van der Plas, “Nile Hymns.”
- 100 Based on traces of Middle Egyptian language (overlaid with Ramesside spellings), Foster, “Thought Couplets” (4) argues it was originally a Middle Kingdom composition. Jan Assmann, “Nilhymnus,” (492–93) agrees with the dating, but suggests that it was not a working liturgy, but a polished literary composition, since it lacks the markers of a working hymn text. Dirk van der Plas, “Nile Hymns,” (144) places its composition during the New Kingdom, during or just after the Amarna Period, because of the echoes of the “Great Hymn to Aten,” and the focus on the sovereign-Hapy identification, common during the Ramesside period.
- 101 Translation based on Foster, “Thought Couplets,” 17, lines 15–26 (with major modifications in third stanza—see next two notes). Compare the more literary translation by Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:206.
- 102 Lichtheim, “Three Philological Notes,” 63–68.
- 103 This reading is suggested by Lichtheim, “Three Philological Notes,” and is supported by Assmann, “Nilhymnus” (492), who interprets that, “With his variable behavior, the humans also vary: they are poor and rich, sad and happy, just and lawless, industrious and lazy, oiled and clothed or naked, bareheaded and neglected, numerous or few, depending on the appearances of the god.” Foster, “Thought Couplets,” does not agree and translates the line as “Who confuses mankind as to when he draws near,” referring to mankind not knowing when Hapy will be coming. The key verb form is *šbb* (a geminated form of the verb *šbi*, used in an emphatic construction). Foster interprets this as “to mix up” “to confuse,” but Lichtheim and Assmann understand it as “to replace,” or by extension, “to change [mankind],” which also has support in the entries in the dictionary, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 436–37. Helck, “Der Text des Nilhymnus,” (22) translates the line as “Es strömen aber die Menschen zusammen bei seinem Herannahen” (But the people flock together at his approach), understanding the verb to mean “sich vermischen” (to commingle, mix together).
- 104 van der Plas, “Nile Hymns.”
- 105 Translation from Foster, “Thought Couplets,” lines 115–24.
- 106 The dates were Day 15 of the first month of Akhet (approximately July 12), and Day 15 of the third month of Shemu (approximately May 12).
- 107 For the hieroglyphic text, see Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions I*, 81–96. For translation, see Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Translations I*, 70–80. See notes in Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Notes and Commentaries*, 69–77.
- 108 Grandet, *Papyrus Harris I*.
- 109 From Grandet, *Papyrus Harris I*, 1:274–79.
- 110 For this interpretation, see Grandet, *Papyrus Harris I*, 2:144–46. Grandet himself tends to see the “Books of Hapy” as representing a liturgical text, like the “Great Hymn to the Nile,” rather than an offering list.
- 111 Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions I*, 91, lines 4–6.
- 112 Grandet, *Papyrus Harris I*, 2:155–56n619 identifies this goddess as *Rnnwt* (Renenutet), a female fecundity deity and suggests she was the prototype of Euthenia, the Wife of the Nile in Roman texts.
- 113 For references, see Bonneau, *La Crue du Nil*, 401–4. There is also one reference from the Arab period, which insists that Egyptians “married” a young woman to the Nile to

CHAPTER 2: EMPIRE AND DIPLOMACY

- 1 Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Empire*, 1:239–49.
- 2 For Egyptian expansion during Early Dynastic times, see Baines, “Civilizations and Empires.”
- 3 Trigger, *Nubia*, 64–81; Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 56–96; Fisher et al., *Ancient Nubia*, 20–22.
- 4 Fisher, *Ancient Nubia*, 22–23.
- 5 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 6.243, 250.
- 6 For an inscription, see Sethe, *Urkunden*, 4:186, line 11; translated in Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 122, no. 5.
- 7 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 123.3166; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2690.
- 8 Trigger, *Nubia*, 114–17.
- 9 Trigger, *Nubia*, 109–10.
- 10 Wengrow, “Cattle Cults.”
- 11 Kemp, “Imperialism and Empire,” 7–58.
- 12 Practically, the Nile alluvium south of the first cataract becomes progressively thinner and agriculture less productive. See Lehner, “Fractal House of Pharaoh,” 282.
- 13 Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 192–93.
- 14 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 115.2985–90; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:225–30.
- 15 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 113.2967–78, Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:207–17.
- 16 Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Empire*, 1:258; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 84, 109; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 6.176.
- 17 Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 110; Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Empire*, 1:258–59. One further type of vassal state was *jimi* (loose rein) polities like Kangju (Sogdiana), which recognized Han authority but were largely autonomous.
- 18 Selbitschka, “Early Silk Road(s).” For the trade thesis, see Yü, *Trade and Expansion*.
- 19 Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 40.
- 20 Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 217; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2692.
- 21 Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 148.
- 22 For these texts, see Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 80, no. 7.
- 23 See Garnsey and Whittaker, *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, “Introduction,” 2. For a critique, see Harris, *War and Imperialism*.
- 24 Conrad and Demarest, *Religion and Empire*.
- 25 Kemp, “Imperialism and Empire,” 19; Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 3.
- 26 For Egypt, see Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*; Morris, *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*, 89–164. For China, see Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 39–70; Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Empire*, 1:191–238.
- 27 Pendlebury et al., *City of Akhenaten*, 113–15, 150, plate LXXXIII (V).
- 28 For an introduction to the Amarna Letters, see Moran, *Amarna*, xiii–xxxix. See also Mynářová, “Discovery,” 37–46.
- 29 Moran, *Amarna*, xviii–xxii. A small number of letters are in Assyrian, Hurrian, or Hittite. The Middle Babylonian language of most Amarna letters is a regional variant, with West Semitic and Hurrian elements.
- 30 See Redford, “Concept of Kingship,” 157–84; Meier, “Diplomacy,” 166–67.
- 31 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2896; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:140–41. For a nearly identical text, see Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 94A.3756–57.
- 32 See Moran, *Amarna*, 10–11 (EA 5).
- 33 Meier, “Diplomacy,” 166–67.
- 34 For the standard and inverted forms of address, see Moran, *Amarna*, xx–xxiii.
- 35 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2899.
- 36 As pointed out by Liverani, “Great Powers Club,” 18; Liverani, *Prestige and Interest*, 197–202, 211–17.

- 37 Moran, *Amarna*, 43 (EA 19), 47 (EA 20), 61 (EA 23).
- 38 Sometimes, the synonymous phrase *kundi* (older and younger brothers) is used. See Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2895; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2692, 94A.3756.
- 39 For example, in Emperor Wen's response to the letter translated in this chapter (Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2897), his wording implies that the Han were the elder brother.
- 40 Bryan, "The Egyptian Perspective on Mitanni," 71–84.
- 41 For example, the phrase, "Person 1 inquires if Person 2 is in good health," is seen in many of the personal letters translated in Giele, "Letter Manuscripts," 403–74.
- 42 For Emperor Wen's response, see, Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2897; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:141–42.
- 43 See Moran, *Amarna*, 8–9 (EA 4).
- 44 For the rules of the gift-giving game, see Liverani, "Great Powers Club," 24–26; Zaccagnini, "Interdependence," 141–53.
- 45 Moran, *Amarna*, 18 (EA 9), lines 7–10.
- 46 Raschke, "Roman Commerce."
- 47 Selbitschka, "Early Silk Road(s)."
- 48 Falkenhausen, "Inconsequential Incomprehensions."
- 49 This follows the interpretation of Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design*.
- 50 Simpson, "Vessels." For the inscriptions, see Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*, 4:372–73. For a study, see Lilyquist, "Tell Basta."
- 51 For this position, see Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 202–3; Simpson, "Vessels," 35–36. There is a variant preposition used within the title on the jug.
- 52 Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design*.
- 53 Moran, *Amarna*, 171–72 (EA 99), 248–51 (EA 162), 251 (EA 163), 270 (EA 190), 365 (EA 367), 366 (EA 369), 367 (EA370).
- 54 Moran, *Amarna*, xxvi–xxxiii; Na'aman, "Egyptian-Canaanite Correspondence," 135–38.
- 55 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 113.2970; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:209–10.
- 56 Moran, *Amarna*, 286 (EA 221).
- 57 For a typical example, see Moran, *Amarna*, 197 (EA 119). For Rib-Hadda's double-dealing ways, see also Morris, *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*, 177–80.
- 58 The main exceptions are when Hurrian (EA 24) or Arzawan (EA 31, EA 32) words for messenger are used instead. See Holmes, "Messengers," 376n1.
- 59 For an overview, see Oller, "Messengers and Ambassadors."
- 60 The hieratic dockets are found on EA 23 and EA 27. For translation, see Moran, *Amarna*, 62 (EA 23) n6, 90 (EA 27) n20. For a transcription of the latter, see Helck, *Urkunden*, 4:754, 1995.
- 61 For the identification with Ramose, see Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, 204–5. The name is spelled variously, Ḥaramašši (EA 20) or Ḥaamašši (EA 27, EA 29). Redford, *Egypt and Canaan* (13), suggests that a proper transcription would be *ḥr-ms* (Hormose), but no major figure with that name is known from Amenhotep III's or IV's court.
- 62 Moran, *Amarna*, 47–50 (EA 20), 63–72 (EA 24), 84–86 (EA 26), 87–89 (EA 27), 92–99 (EA 29). Meniu is known from a limestone portrait statue in the Louvre. Barbotin, "Le buste du scribe royal Meniou."
- 63 For Liu Jing's biography, see Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 99.2715–20.
- 64 For Zhang Qian's biography, see Ban Gu, *Han shu* 61.2687–98; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 207–38.
- 65 In a previous letter (EA 7), this man Salmu is called a "messenger." In another letter (EA 11), he is twice called a "Salmu, the merchant." See Moran, *Amarna*, 14 (EA 7) lines 73–82, 21 (EA 11), verso lines 1–5.
- 66 Moran, *Amarna*, 112 (EA 39), lines 10–20. Holmes, "Messengers," (378n21) prefers to call the Amarna envoys "ambassadorial merchants."
- 67 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 123.3171; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:242.
- 68 Holmes, "Messengers," 377–78.
- 69 Moran, *Amarna*, 7 (EA 3), 13 (EA 7), 8–10, 39 (EA 16), lines 6–8.
- 70 Moran, *Amarna*, 93 (EA 29), lines 32–37.
- 71 For gifts from Mitanni to the Egyptian envoy and translator, see Moran, *Amarna*, 50 (EA

- 21), lines 24–29.
- 72 Holmes, “Messengers,” 376–81. For the Egyptian detention of Babylonian envoys, see Moran, *Amarna*, 7 (EA 3) 12–16 (EA 7); for Mitanni, 63–71 (EA 24), 90–92 (EA 28), 92–99 (EA 29); for Alashiya, 111–12 (EA 38).
- 73 Liverani, “Great Powers Club,” 22.
- 74 Moran, *Amarna*, 90–91 (EA 28), line 2.
- 75 Moran, *Amarna*, 39 (EA 16).
- 76 Moran, *Amarna*, 47 (EA 20), lines 18–27.
- 77 For example, see Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2911; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:154–55.
- 78 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2915; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:158.
- 79 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 110.2913; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:156–57.
- 80 Moran, *Amarna*, 39 (EA 16). This follows the interpretation of Redford, *Akhenaten*, 235. Other scholars suggest that standing in the sun just refers to the time spent on long journeys through the desert.
- 81 Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriage,” 179.
- 82 Thatcher, “Marriages”; Pan, “Marriage Alliances,” 95.
- 83 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 99.2719. The whole proposal is translated in Chin, “Defamiliarizing the Foreigner,” 340–41.
- 84 Chin, “Defamiliarizing the Foreigner,” 341–42.
- 85 The *Shi ji* account (99.2719) describes the woman as a *jiarenzi* (a child of the [imperial] household), while the *Han shu* (94A.3754) describes her as a *zongshi nü wengzhu* (princess of the imperial house). According to the commentary, *wengzhu* is a term used to describe the daughter of a regional lord. This accords with the type of women sent to marry the Wusun leaders.
- 86 Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Empire*, 1:140–41.
- 87 Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*.
- 88 Yü, “Han Foreign Relations,” 387.
- 89 Holmgren, “Imperial Marriage,” 77.
- 90 For Zhonghang Yue’s defense of the Xiongnu practice, see *Shi ji*, 110.2900.
- 91 This letter is only alluded to by Sima Qian, but Ban Gu (*Han shu* 94.3754–55) reproduces it fully; partially translated in Chin, “Defamiliarizing the Foreigner,” 348.
- 92 Chin, “Defamiliarizing the Foreigner,” 348.
- 93 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 96B.3901; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 143–44.
- 94 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2691–92; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 214.
- 95 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2692; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 217–18.
- 96 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 96B.3902–04. Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 146–49; Pan, “Marriage Alliances, 98–99.
- 97 For Liu Jian’s biography, see Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 53.2414–18.
- 98 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 96B.3903; Translation from Chin, *Savage Exchange*, 214.
- 99 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 96B.3904–3908; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 149–58. Documents from the Xuanquanzhi site record logistical arrangements related to the joint Han-Wusun foray and for carriages bringing the Princess Jieyou home to Chang’an. See Zhang Defang, “Xuanquan,” 358–60, 366–67. Though the *Han shu* records (96B.3906) that Princess Jieyou gave birth to a fourth son (by her third husband), Zhang (367) points out that this is improbable, since she was around sixty at the time.
- 100 Ban Gu, *Han shu* 96B.3906; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 154, for the hostage system, 60–62.
- 101 Ban Gu, *Han shu* 96B.3905–6; in Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 152–53. Documents from the Xuanquanzhi site record provisions for this princess. See Zhang Defang, “Xuanquan,” 360–64.
- 102 Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 60.
- 103 Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriage,” 181–82, suggests that the Theban nobility practiced diplomatic marriage during the Second Intermediate Period, when they married daughters to the Hyksos rulers. Morris, *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*, 71–72, suggests that Mentuhotep II married the daughters of Lower Nubian chiefs as part of marriage

diplomacy.

- 104 For studies, see Meier, “Diplomacy”; Artzi, “Political Marriages”; Zaccagnini, “Late Bronze Age Marriages.”
- 105 Moran, *Amarna*, 93 (EA 29), lines 16–27.
- 106 Meier, “Diplomacy,” 169.
- 107 Though the amount of gold in the bride-price for Gilukhepa is unknown, Tushratta recalls in a later letter to Akhenaten the price paid for Taduhepa was “beyond measure, rivalling in height the heaven and earth.” See Moran, *Amarna*, 93 (EA 29), lines 16–27.
- 108 Though the dowry list for Gilukhepa’s does not survive (it is referred to obliquely in EA 24 [III], lines 35–36), the majority of the dowry list of Taduhepa does, listing thousands of items of gold, jewelry, textiles, horses, and horse-gear. See Moran, *Amarna*, 51–61 (EA 22).
- 109 For the public display of Taduhepa’s dowry, see Moran, *Amarna*, 67 (EA 24) (III, lines, 21–34).
- 110 Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, 102; for the gold remark, see Moran, *Amarna*, 44–45 (EA 19).
- 111 For an overview, see “Large Commemorative Scarabs,” in Kozloff, Bryan, and Berman, *Egypt’s Dazzling Sun*, 67–72; Blankenberg-van Delden, *Large Commemorative Scarabs*.
- 112 Kozloff, *Amenhotep III* (102–4) speculates that both of Tiy’s parents were of Mitanni origin, and that Tiy herself probably spoke Hurrian.
- 113 The current location of this piece is unknown. For a transcription, see Helck, *Urkunden*, 1738; for a reproduction of all five pieces, see Blankenberg-van Delden, *Large Commemorative Scarabs*, 18, 129–33, 160–62, pls. XXIX (D1, D2, D3, D4), XXXIV (LSD1). Translation after Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 33 (with modifications).
- 114 See the example in the spoils from the battle of Megiddo, in Sethe, *Urkunden*, 659, line 14; Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 31.
- 115 Sethe, *Urkunden*, 668, line 5; Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 51, where he translates it as “a benevolence.”
- 116 Moran, *Amarna*, 1 (EA 1), lines 10–21.
- 117 Kozloff (*Amenhotep III*, 107) reports that this title comes from the reign of Thutmose IV, who also had a Mitannian bride. Gilukhepa was probably kept under similar arrangements. See also Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 35.
- 118 Moran, *Amarna*, 41–42 (EA 17), lines 30–35. This is following the interpretation of Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, 107–8.
- 119 See Moran, *Amarna*, 41–42 (EA 17).
- 120 For the negotiations, see Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriage,” 184n35; Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, 200–206, 218–20; Moran, *Amarna*, 43–44 (EA 19), lines 17–24; 47 (EA 20), lines 18–32; 50 (EA 21), lines 13–23, 51–61 (EA 22), 63–71 (EA 24).
- 121 For the gifts and dowry sent by Tushratta, see Moran, *Amarna*, 51–61 (EA 22), 72–84 (EA 25). For the gift of the goddess, see Moran, *Amarna*, 61–62 (EA 23); Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, 220.
- 122 The subsequent marriage of Taduhepa to Akhenaten is referred to directly in letters Tushratta wrote to Akhenaten, and also implied when he calls Akhenaten his “son-in-law.” See Moran, *Amarna*, 86 (EA 27), lines 1–5; 90 (EA 28), lines 2–4, 8–9; 92 (EA 29), lines 1–3; 84 (EA 26), lines 4–5.
- 123 Dodson, *Complete Royal Families*, 144 (table), 146. For Kiya, see Arnold, *Royal Women of Amarna*, 14–15, 104–7, figs. 100, 101.
- 124 Moran, *Amarna*, 8 (EA4), lines 4–22.
- 125 Meier, “Diplomacy,” 171.
- 126 Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriages,” 183; Moran, *Amarna*, 171 (EA 99), lines 10–20. For another vassal obsequiously sending his daughter, see Moran, *Amarna*, 268–69 (EA 187), lines 22–25.
- 127 Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 30. For example, see Moran, *Amarna*, 263 (EA 180).
- 128 For the system of hostage princes in the Egyptian empire, see Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 198, 224; Morris, *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*, 154–56.
- 129 The daughter of a chief is listed as the first item of “tribute” of Retenu (Syria) in year forty of Thutmose III, with her jewelry, attendants, horses, and livestock. See Sethe, *Urkunden*, 668–69, lines 1–15; Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 52 (translation), 236–37

(analysis).

- 130 The tomb near Luxor was looted in 1916, and many items later entered the Met collections. The museum later excavated the plundered site. See Winlock, *Three Egyptian Princesses*; Lilyquist, *Three Foreign Wives*.
- 131 This is well expressed in Liverani, *Prestige and Interest*, 217.
- 132 Liverani, *Prestige and Interest*. This work was later published in a streamlined edition, Liverani, *International Relations*.
- 133 Kilani, *Byblos*, 202–10; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 37–40.
- 134 Montet, *Byblos et L'égypte*.
- 135 Kilani, *Byblos*, 219–20.
- 136 Weinstein, “Byblos.”
- 137 Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 106, but see Kilani, *Byblos*, 106.
- 138 Redford, *Wars in Syria*, 174–75; This is recorded on the funerary inscription of Thutmose's chancellor Senneferi, from Theban tomb TT99. See Sethe, *Urkunden*, 4:531–36, no. 173; Kilani, *Byblos*, 116–23. Walls three and four of the tomb chapel depict the acquisition of lumber. See Strudwick, *Pharaoh's Chancellor*, 98–105, plates 15–17. See also the Gebel Barkal stele; Kilani, *Byblos*, 104–16.
- 139 Moran, *Amarna*, 205–7 (EA 126).
- 140 For a transcription, see, Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Stories*, 61–76; for translations, see Goedicke, *Report of Wenamun*; Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 116–24. For other analyses, see Liverani, *Prestige and Interest*, 247–54; Baines, “On Wenamun as a Literary Text”; Baines, “On the Background of Wenamun.”
- 141 Waley, “Heavenly Horses.”
- 142 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 61.2693–704; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 225–36.
- 143 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 96A.3895; Hulsewé and Loewe, *China in Central Asia*, 135.
- 144 Hu Pingsheng and Zhang Defang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan*, 104, slip no. II 0115 (4): 37.

CHAPTER 3: AKHENATEN, WANG MANG, AND THE LIMITS OF REFORM

- 1 Bryan, *Reign of Thutmose IV*.
- 2 This is the view of Bryan, “Eighteenth Dynasty,” 218–71. Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*, contends that he ascended the throne close to twenty.
- 3 Bryan, “Eighteenth Dynasty”; Van De Mieroop, *History of Ancient Egypt*, 151–83.
- 4 See essays in Nylan and Vankeerberghen, *Chang'an 26 BCE*.
- 5 Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 356.
- 6 Montserrat, *Akhenaten*.
- 7 Hu Shih, “Wang Mang.”
- 8 For translations of the sources for Akhenaten's reign, see Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*.
- 9 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 112–16. See translation and analysis in Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 172–92.
- 10 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 73–86. For a critical edition, see Murnane and Van Siclen, *Boundary Stelae*.
- 11 Freed, D'Auria, and Markowitz, *Pharaohs of the Sun*; Kampp-Seyfried, *In the Light of Amarna*.
- 12 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4124; Dubs, *History*, 3:312.
- 13 The controversy over a potential coregency has raged for decades. At the one extreme are those who suggest little or no coregency, while the other extreme claims it went on for as long as twelve years and that Amenhotep III and Tiy tacitly approved of the changes. See Dodson, “The Co-Regency Conundrum.” For various positions in this debate, see Redford, *Akhenaten*, 57–58 (no coregency); Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 169–82 (long coregency); Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 75–78 (short coregency of two years).
- 14 Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 269; Redford, “Akhenaten: New Theories and Old Facts,” 26.
- 15 Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 104–5.
- 16 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 212–13 (no. 99).
- 17 Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 154–55; Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 278, 289–90; Redford, *Akhenaten*, 175–

- 18 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 213 (no. 99).
- 19 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4095, reports that it was a forgery by Ai Zhang, an ambitious man.
- 20 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4108; Dubs, *History*, 3:280–81.
- 21 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4119; Dubs, *History*, 3:301–3. Gaozu was to continue to receive sacrifice as a “guest” in the Bright Hall of Wang Mang.
- 22 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4169; Dubs, *History*, 3:412.
- 23 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4169; Dubs, *History*, 3:412–13. In 23 CE, Wang Mang also vandalized structures at the tombs of Emperors Yuan and Cheng, blackening their walls to obscure the red color of the Han. See Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4186; Dubs, *History* 3:455.
- 24 Redford, *Akhenaten*, 170–72.
- 25 Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 48.
- 26 Akhenaten’s father had been the first to promote a cult of his own divinity, possibly as a reaction against this trend.
- 27 Sanft, *Communication and Cooperation*.
- 28 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4095; Dubs, *History*, 3:257.
- 29 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4103; Dubs, *History*, 3:271.
- 30 Dubs, “Wang Mang,” 231; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4136–37; Dubs, *History*, 3:215–16, 338–46.
- 31 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4095; Dubs, *History*, 3:258.
- 32 Wang Zijin, “Wang Mang”; Sun Ji, “Zhu Guo gucheng.”
- 33 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4128, 4132, 4134; Dubs, *History*, 3:320, 331–32, 335–36.
- 34 Dodson, *Amarna Sunset*, 170.
- 35 Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, 18–23; Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian*, 5–7. Akhenaten’s great religious text, the “Great Hymn to Aten” is written in a variant of the classical language, which Junge called “Late Middle Egyptian.”
- 36 Dubs, “Wang Mang,” 219–65; Dubs, “An Ancient Chinese Stock of Gold”; Swann, *Food and Money*. See also, Hu Shih, “Wang Mang,” 218–30.
- 37 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4118; Dubs, *History*, 3:300, 370, 526–30.
- 38 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4087; Dubs, *History*, 3:235, 510–17.
- 39 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1177; Swann, *Food and Money*, 324–25.
- 40 The Chinese graph for the Liu house of the Han contained the elements *jīn* (metal) and *dao* (knife), so Wang Mang felt it necessary to demonetize the metal, knife-shaped coins.
- 41 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1177–79, 1184; Swann, *Food and Money*, 325–33, 349–52.
- 42 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1144; 99B.4111; Dubs, *History*, 3:286–87.
- 43 Dubs, *History*, 3:530–33.
- 44 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24A.1144; Swann, *Food and Money*, 211.
- 45 For two differing discussions of the economy of ancient Egypt, see Muhs, *Ancient Egyptian Economy*, and Warburton, *Fundamentals of Economics*.
- 46 Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 248–60.
- 47 Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 26.
- 48 Wang Zhongshu, *Han Civilization*, 149.
- 49 Nickel, “Brick-Built Heavens,” 19.
- 50 Huang Minglan and Guo Yinqiang, *Luoyang Han mu bishu*, 137, plate 21.
- 51 Hsing I-tien, “Muquan, waiqi, rusheng.”
- 52 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 11.342.
- 53 For an overview, see Freed, “Art in the Service of Religion.”
- 54 Robins, *Proportion and Style*, 119–50.
- 55 Kemp, “Window of Appearance”; Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 135–37. For depictions of the feature, see Davies, *Rock Tombs*, 1: plates 18, 26; 2: plates 14, 41; 3: plates 13; 4: plates 8; 6: plates 17.
- 56 Barbieri-Low, “Organization.”
- 57 Redford, *Akhenaten*, 63–85; Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 69–85; Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 91–95. Reeves suggests the small size of the *talatat* wasn’t just for convenience, but emulated antiquity, for small blocks were used in buildings of the Third Dynasty king Djoser.

- 58 Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 69–72.
- 59 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1179; Dubs, *History*, 3:492–93; Cf. translation of Swann, *Food and Money*, 334.
- 60 See Puett, “Centering the Realm,” 129–54.
- 61 Most scholars now believe *Zhouli* was written during the late Warring States or Qin period. See Boltz, “Zhouli.”
- 62 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1179–80; Swann, *Food and Money*, 335–38, n686; Dubs, *History*, 3:493–96.
- 63 See Xi’an Shi Wenwu Baohu Kaogusuo, “Xi’an Zhangjiapu.” See Zhang Xiaoli, “Xi’an Zhangjiapu.” Thanks to Lothar von Falkenhausen for pointing this out.
- 64 Falkenhausen, “Antiquarianism in East Asia,” 47–48.
- 65 Loewe, “Wang Mang.”
- 66 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4106; Dubs, *History*, 3:277–78.
- 67 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4162; Dubs, *History*, 3:398.
- 68 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4161–62; Dubs, *History*, 3:397–400.
- 69 For the excavation report, see Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, eds., *Xi-Han lizhi jianzhu*. See also Baker, “Archaeology of History,” 380–97.
- 70 Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Xi-Han lizhi jianzhu*, 196.
- 71 Murnane and Van Siclen, *Boundary Stelae*; Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 32–35.
- 72 Translation from Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 75 (with modification). For a transcription and transliteration, see Murnane and Van Siclen, *Boundary Stelae*, 11–68 plates 2–12, 22, 23A, 31B, 32.
- 73 Murnane and Van Siclen, *Boundary Stelae*, 183. For documentation of the 2004 destruction of Stele S by looters, see www.amarnaproject.com/pages/amarna_the_place/boundary_stelae/index.shtml.
- 74 Murnane and Van Siclen, *Boundary Stelae*, 37–38 (with slight modification). Akhetaten was originally conceived as just occupying the Nile’s eastern bank. Later stelae expanded the domain of the god to include the west bank.
- 75 Mallinson, “Sacred Landscape.”
- 76 For the identification of “Akhenaten’s malady” as Froehlich’s Syndrome, see Alred, *Akhenaten*, 231–34; for Marfan’s Syndrome, see Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 150–52.
- 77 Gay Robins has shown that Akhenaten’s sculptors replaced the normal eighteen-square grid height of a royal image with a twenty-grid system, adding squares to the upper half of the body only. She also suggests that the stomach paunch and absence of genitals are a reference to fecundity gods like Hapy, which display these features. See Robins, *Egyptian Painting and Relief*, 43–52; Robins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, 150–53; Robins, *Proportion and Style*, 119–50. It is also possible that these changes just exaggerated prominent features of Akhenaten’s genuine appearance.
- 78 Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*.
- 79 For a transcription, see Davies, *Rock Tombs*, 6: plates 27 and 41; translated in Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 174 (line 65); cf. translation in Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 112–16.
- 80 Translation from Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 176, lines 108–10.
- 81 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4133; Dubs, *History*, 3:333.
- 82 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B. 4130; Dubs, *History*, 3:324–25. See also *Han shu*, 24A.1144; Swann, *Food and Money*, 211–12. For these reforms, see Dubs, “Wang Mang,” 243–51.
- 83 Hu Shih, “Wang Mang,” 228–30.
- 84 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4176, 4179; Dubs, *History*, 3:427–28, 434–35.
- 85 Stevens, *Private Religion at Amarna*; Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 235–45.
- 86 Redford, *Akhenaten*, 189; Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 293. Helck, *Urkunden*, no. 2024. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 207–8, no. 94 (Tomb of Pere).
- 87 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24A.1145; Swann, *Food and Money*, 213. Dubs, *History*, 3:480.
- 88 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1185; Dubs, *History*, 3:504.; Swann, *Food and Money*, 356. For reduction of salaries, see Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4143; Dubs, *History*, 3:358–62.
- 89 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 24B.1185; Dubs, *History*, 3:504; Swann, *Food and Money*, 356.
- 90 Bielenstein, “Census of China,” corroborates Ban Gu’s claim of a 50 percent drop in registered population, but only for North China, which lost eighteen million people

between the census of 2 CE and one from 140 CE.

- 91 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 73–81.
- 92 Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 155–56; Redford, *Akhenaten*, 225.
- 93 The presentation of the white pheasant to the Duke of Zhou is mentioned in the lost text, *Xiaojing yuanshen qi*, quoted in Li Fang et al., *Taiping yulan*, juan 917, “Yuzu bu si,” 8b (p. 4068).
- 94 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 12.348, 99A.4046; Dubs, *History*, 3:64, 141.
- 95 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 12.352; 28B.1671; Dubs, *History*, 3:71.
- 96 Wang Mang hated the un-Classical notion that there was more than one ruler in the world, so he changed the title of regional lords, formerly called *wang* (king), and made them the lower title of *gong* (duke). Foreign rulers who had formerly enjoyed the title of *wang* were demoted to be *hou* (marquis). See Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4105, 4115, 4119; 94B.3820–22; Dubs, *History*, 3:274, 295–96, 301.
- 97 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4051; Dubs, *History*, 3:153–54.
- 98 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4121, 4125–26; 94B.3824–25; Dubs, *History*, 3:305–6, 313–16.
- 99 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4128; Dubs, *History*, 3:318–19.
- 100 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4156, 4167; Dubs, *History*, 3:382–84, 410.
- 101 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4133; Dubs, *History*, 3:333.
- 102 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4146; Dubs, *History*, 3:366. Bielenstein, “Wang Mang,” argues that Central Asia was never “cut off” during Wang Mang’s reign, since a new protector general was appointed in 16 CE. He claims the region was cut off during the civil war after Wang Mang’s death, but that Ban Gu intentionally wrote this event back in time to malign Wang Mang.
- 103 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4130; Dubs, *History*, 3:325.
- 104 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4139; Dubs, *History*, 3:348.
- 105 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99B.4130; Dubs, *History*, 3:325–27.
- 106 Davies, *Rock Tombs*, 2: plates 37–39; 3: plate 14; Morris, *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*, 253–66.
- 107 Fisher, Lacovara, Ikram, and D’Auria, *Ancient Nubia*, 29–30, 92–93; Redford, *Akhenaten*, 194.
- 108 Moran, *Amarna*, 84–85 (EA 26), 86–89 (EA 27), 90–91 (EA 28), 94–95 (EA 29).
- 109 Redford, *Akhenaten*, 195–200; Moran, *Amarna*, 122 (EA 51).
- 110 Moran, *Amarna*, 146–47 (EA 76), 149 (EA 79), 153 (EA 83), 154–55 (EA 84).
- 111 For what appears to be a plague hitting Cyprus, see Moran, *Amarna*, 107 (EA 35). For Sumur, see Moran, *Amarna*, 170 (EA 96).
- 112 Redford, “Hyksos Invasion”; Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 26–27 (where *zni* [mn.t] is translated as “grave disease”); For the text of the “Restoration Stele,” see Helck, *Urkunden*, 2025–32, no. 772. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists* (293–94), suggests that echoes of Akhenaten’s plague can be found in the later historian Manetho, who talks about a pharaoh who “wanted to see the gods,” but their manifestation was hindered by pestilence, so he amassed plague-stricken men and forced them to work in quarries (quoted in Flavius Josephus, *Contra Apion*, I, 26).
- 113 Goedicke, “‘The Cannanite Illness,’” 92.
- 114 Bielenstein, “Restoration of the Han Dynasty [I],” 141–54; Bielenstein, “Wang Mang,” 241–45.
- 115 Dubs, *History*, 3:112–13.
- 116 Gizewski and Mlasowsky, “*Damnatio memoriae*.”
- 117 Martin, *Royal Tomb*.
- 118 Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 80–84, 160, suggests that the mummy from KV55 is Akhenaten himself. The coffin had been built for a woman (likely Kiya), then refashioned for a monarch.
- 119 See Reeves, *Akhenaten*, 179–91; Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 301–2; Redford, *Akhenaten*, 204–31; Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 301–3.
- 120 For transcriptions, see Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*, 1:176–179, no. 77. For translations, see Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Translations*, 1:153–56, no. 77. For notes, see Kitchen and Davies, *Rameside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Notes and Commentaries*, 1:117–25, no. 77.

- 121 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 240–41, no. 109.
- 122 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 240–41, no. 109.
- 123 Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 241, no. 110; Gardiner, “Later Allusion,” 124. This is a fragmentary papyrus in Berlin (Inv. 3040A). This wording led Kemp, *City of Akhenaten*, 23–24, to suggest that Akhenaten was removed from the legitimate succession not because he failed, but because he actually was a usurper (like Wang Mang).
- 124 Redford, *Akhenaten*, 231. For a discussion of cultural memory, see Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*.
- 125 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4190; Dubs, *History*, 3:462.
- 126 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4191–92; Dubs, *History*, 3:465–67.
- 127 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99C.4194.
- 128 Dubs, *History*, 3:248n34.1. As Dubs notes, Ban Gu occasionally slips up, and several *zhao* and *zhi* have crept into the text of Wang Mang’s biography and into references in other chapters. This demonstrates that the contemporary sources Ban Gu was using considered Wang Mang legitimate.
- 129 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 99A.4095.
- 130 Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period*; Dodson, *Afterglow of Empire*.

CHAPTER 4: LEGAL PRINCIPLES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- 1 This section is informed by Bedell, “Criminal Law”; Eyre, “Crime and Adultery”; McDowell, *Jurisdiction*; McDowell, *Village Life*, 165–200; Allam, *Verfahrensrecht*.
- 2 Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 1.1, p. 261; Mattha and Hughes, *Demotic Legal Code*.
- 3 Kruchten, *Le décret d’Horemheb*.
- 4 Bedell, “Criminal Law,” 2.
- 5 Bedell, “Criminal Law.”
- 6 Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujuan Zhengli Xiaozu, *Shuihudi*, 13–14, “Yu shu.”
- 7 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:210–11.
- 8 See Fang Xuanling, *Jin shu*, 30.923.
- 9 Lau, “Private Jurisdiction.”
- 10 McDowell, *Jurisdiction*.
- 11 For oracles and their use in legal cases, see McDowell, *Village Life*, 172–75, 181–82, 253–54; McDowell, *Jurisdiction*, 107–42; Černý, “Egyptian Oracles.”
- 12 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:89–109.
- 13 Černý and Posener, *Papyrus Hiératiques*, VII.
- 14 Baines and Eyre, “Four Notes on Literacy,” estimate 25 to 30 percent of adult males at Deir el-Medina were literate. If the service staff was excluded, those figures rise above 40 percent.
- 15 Haring “Oral Practice,” argues that written legal documentation only begins in the Twentieth Dynasty, replacing an exclusively oral culture.
- 16 McDowell, *Jurisdiction*, 3–9.
- 17 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:456–73.
- 18 Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujuan Zhengli Xiaozu, *Shuihudi*, “Falü dawen,” slip nos. 25–26; Translation from Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 127 D21 (with modifications). See updated transcription in Chen Wei, *Qin jiandu heji*, vol. 1A:204–6, slip nos. 25–26.
- 19 In the laws from Zhangjiashan, all robbery valued under 110 coins carried only a fine. See Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:462–63, “Robbery,” no. 1 (slip nos. 55–56).
- 20 Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujuan Zhengli Xiaozu, *Shuihudi*, 100 “Falü dawen,” slip no. 28; Translation from Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 128 D23, with important modifications, based on Chen Wei, *Qin jiandu heji*, vol. 1A:206–7, slip no. 28.
- 21 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 102.2751–57; Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 50.2307–12.
- 22 Peet, *Tomb-Robberies*; Peet, *Mayer Papyri*; McDowell, *Village Life*, 194–200.
- 23 Cf. Peet (P. Amherst), *Tomb Robberies*, 48; Based on the restored P. Amherst, after the upper half of the papyrus studied by Peet had been rediscovered (P. Leopold II). See

- transcription and translation in Capart, Gardiner, and Van de Walle, “New Light,” 171.
- 24 Peet, *Mayer Papyri*, 18 line 13.B.1.
- 25 Peet, *Tomb Robberies*, 27.
- 26 From the “Law Code of Hammurabi” article no. 153: “If a man’s wife has her husband killed on account of [her relationship with] another male, they shall impale that woman.” See Roth and Hoffner, *Law Collections*, 110.
- 27 Tyldesley, *Judgement*, 66.
- 28 P. BM 10052, p. 8, lines 19–20. Translation from Peden, *Historical Inscriptions*, 275; cf. translation by Peet, *Tomb Robberies*, 151.
- 29 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:188–90; 2:466–67, “Robbery,” no. 9 (slip nos. 65–66).
- 30 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:462–63, “Robbery,” no. 1 (slip nos. 55–56).
- 31 Translation from McDowell, *Village Life*, 182 (with slight modifications). See also Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, 6:144; For transcription and German translation, see Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 151–52, no. 147. For a facsimile and transcription, see Černý and Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, plates 27.3, 27A.3.
- 32 Following McDowell, *Jurisdiction*, 115–16.
- 33 Černý and Groll, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, 336, example no. 922.
- 34 Černý, *Papyrus Hiératiques*, no. 27.
- 35 For the text of this passage, see Zába, *Maximes de Ptahhotep*, 37–38, lines 277–88; translation from Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:68. For detailed study, see Hagen, *Instructions of Ptahhotep*.
- 36 Eyre, “Crime and Adultery,” 92–105.
- 37 For the text of this part of the story, see Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Stories*, 14, lines 11–15; translation in Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 80–90.
- 38 Eyre, “Crime and Adultery” (98), cites the Middle Kingdom letters from Heqanakht, in which the absentee landholder warns those of his household not to engage in fornication with his concubine, or he will expel them from his household. See James, *Hekanakhte*, 33, lines 40–44; Allen, *Heqanakht*, 17, 108–10, has a different, nonsexual interpretation of these lines.
- 39 See transcription and translation in Černý, “Papyrus Salt”; For photographs, plus German translation, see Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 1:281–87, no. 266; 2: plates 84–85.
- 40 Eyre, “Crime and Adultery,” 104.
- 41 Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian Zhengli Xiaozu, *Shuihudi*, 163, “Falü dawen,” slip no. 95; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 207–8, E25; Chen Wei, *Qin jiandu heji*, vol. 1A:318, slip no. 95.
- 42 For discussion of this term, see Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:1388–90n16.
- 43 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:616–17, “Miscellaneous Matters,” no. 9 (slip no. 190).
- 44 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:616–19, “Miscellaneous Matters,” nos. 10, 14 (slip nos. 191, 195).
- 45 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:616–17, “Miscellaneous Matters,” no. 11 (slip no. 192).
- 46 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2: 616–17, “Miscellaneous Matters,” no. 12 (slip no. 193).
- 47 For the papyrus and a transcription, see Černý, *Papyrus Hiératiques*, 4 and 5, plates 16–17a; Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 1:301–2, no. 272, 2: plates 98 and 99. The dating is according to Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*, 5: nos. 578 and 579; translation from McDowell, *Village Life*, 47–49, no. 22, with slight modification and parenthetical clarifications. For more on Merysekhmet, see Janssen, “Two Personalities,” 109–23.
- 48 Eyre, “Crime and Adultery,” 100.
- 49 Eyre, “Crime and Adultery,” 103.
- 50 McDowell, *Jurisdiction*.

- 51 Barberi-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, sec. 4.21.
- 52 Barberi-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:800–801, “Households,” no. 17.
- 53 Hinsch, “Women, Kinship, and Property.” For the original publication, see Yangzhou Bowuguan, ed., “Jiangsu Yizheng xupu.” For further analysis and references to other scholarship, see Li Jiemin, “Yangzhou Yizheng xupu.” Scholars debate whether Zhu Ling is the same person as the Old Woman mentioned in part two, one of her children, or one of her husbands. This translation follows Hinsch and the view that Zhu Ling was one of her children, also called Zizhen.
- 54 Li Jiemin, “Yangzhou Yizheng xupu.”
- 55 It was originally believed that the will was buried in a male’s tomb (i.e., Zhu Ling’s), but Li Jiemin, “Yangzhou Yizheng xupu,” confirmed that the coffin with the documents contained a female skeleton.
- 56 Černý, “Will of Naunakhte.” The papyrus is in the Ashmolean Museum (P. Ashmolean 1945.97). The translation is based on McDowell, *Village Life*, 38–40, combined with Černý. It excludes the corollary. See German translation and commentary in Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 268–274, no. 262; For a popular account of Naunakhte’s world, see Donker van Heel, *Mrs. Naunakhte*.
- 57 Černý, “Will of Naunakhte,” 42; Haring, “Oral Practice.”
- 58 Pestman, “Who Were the Owners.”
- 59 Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property*.
- 60 As recorded in the “prologue” and “epilogue” to Hammurbi’s code. See Roth and Hoffner, *Law Collections*, 76–77, 80, 133–34.

CHAPTER 5: SCRIBAL CULTURE IN LIFE AND DEATH

- 1 Many of these cross-cultural statements are well presented in Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*.
- 2 Scholarship on Egyptian scribes is extensive. See James, *Pharaoh’s People*, chaps. 5–6; Wentz, “Scribes”; Morenz, *Schriftlichkeitskultur*; Roccati, “Scribes”; Donker van Heel and Haring, *Writing in a Workmen’s Village*; Ragazzoli, “Weak Hands”; Ragazzoli, *Scribes*; Pinarello, *Archaeological Discussion*; Allon and Navrátilová, *Ancient Egyptian Scribes*. For scholarship on Chinese scribes, see Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women”; Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*; Barberi-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:89–110, 2:1084–111; Tsang Wing Ma, “Scribes”; Selbitschka, “I Write.”
- 3 The issue of Egyptian scribal titles is problematic. Scribal titles and duties in Egypt were less clearly defined than in China. The basic word for scribe was *zš* (more accurately transliterated as *zḥ3.w*). This was prefixed before the scribe’s assigned jurisdiction, such as *zš-n-ḫ3.ty* (scribe of the vizier). It also appears in the word “painter/draftsman” (*zš-ḫd*). However, dignitaries in Egypt often assumed extra empty titles for prestige, including scribal offices they never performed. Pinarello, *Archaeological Discussion*, argues that the very category of scribe in Egyptology is a fetish of nineteenth-century imperialism. Allon and Navrátilová, *Ancient Egyptian Scribes*, 1–4, retain the category but explore its multiple meanings.
- 4 Court scribes were part of a long tradition in China, serving major roles at the Shang and Zhou courts. The position held both clerical and ritual dimensions, and even under Han law, scribes were still grouped with diviners and invocators. The certified early imperial scribe was called *shi*. Scribal titles appear throughout the bureaucracy, with *shi* prefixed by some category, such as *lingshi* (scribe director) or *yushi* (judiciary scribe). These officials were clearly scribes. However, some high officials like the Yushi Dafu (chief prosecutor) also had the word “scribe” in his title, but we would hardly consider him one of their class (cf. our “secretary of state”). Then, there are the office assistants (*guan-zuo*), literate men who performed scribal functions, but had never been certified as *shi*, and were not part of the scribal caste. For more discussion, see Selbitschka, “I Write,” 418–25.
- 5 Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 30–33. Wentz, “Scribes,” 2211, reconstructs the pronunciation (with vowels) of this word as *zakhau* (Coptic *sakh*).

- 6 Tsien, *Written*, 178–82; Sun Ji, *Han dai*, 318–20.
- 7 Tsien, *Written*, 182–87; Sun Ji, *Han dai*, 320–21.
- 8 Wentz, “Scribes,” 2211.
- 9 The ink from Yinwan tomb number 6 had dissolved away, but the tomb inventory records “ink, one bag.” See Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan et al., *Yinwan Han mu jianpu*, 131.
- 10 For examples of these cases, see Sun Ji, *Han dai*, 319, figures 71.12, 71.13, 71.14, 71.15.
- 11 See Ko, *Social Life of Inkstones*.
- 12 Tsien, *Written*, 96–125; Sun Ji, *Han dai*, 324–39.
- 13 Wentz, “Scribes,” 2212; Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 9–23; Černý, *Paper & Books*; James, *Pharaoh’s People*, 157–61.
- 14 Tsien, *Written*, 194–98; Sun Ji, *Han dai*, 319, 321–23, figures 71.16, 71.17, 71.18, 71.19.
- 15 See Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 59.2645, 90.3659.
- 16 For the excavation report, see Carnarvon et al., *Five Years’ Explorations*, 75–77 and plate LXVI. For the association of the basket with Djehuty’s coffin, see Smith, “Intact Tombs,” 208. For the archaeological context of scribal kits, see Pinarello, *Archaeological Discussion*, 37–40. This kit is also discussed in Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 33–35; James, *Pharaoh’s People*, 155–56.
- 17 Parkinson and Quirke (*Papyrus*, 33) suggest it might have held down one end of an open papyrus scroll.
- 18 This theory is suggested by James, *Pharaoh’s People*, 156.
- 19 For the preliminary report, see Jinan Cheng Fenghuangshan Yiliuba Hao Han Mu Fajue Zhenglizu, “Hubei Jiangling.” For the final report, see Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan.” The texts and excavation summary were also published in Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Jiangling Fenghuangshan*. For the writing kit, see Huazhong Shifan Xueyuan and Zhong Zhicheng, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan.”
- 20 Guo Jue, “Funerary Relocation Documents.”
- 21 Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 35–36.
- 22 Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 32.
- 23 Ma Yi, “Jiandu shidai de shuxie”; Ma Yi, “Zhongguo gudai shuxie.”
- 24 Ma Tsang Wing, “Scribes,” 297–333.
- 25 Wentz, “Scribes” (2214) notes that during the Old Kingdom only the sons of officials or royalty received a scribal education, usually from their fathers, but by the First Intermediate Period, schools were established in regional centers. By the New Kingdom, boys from less exalted backgrounds were being trained in scribal schools.
- 26 Dorn, *Arbeiterhütten*.
- 27 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:1093 (no. 1), 1097 (no. 5), 1099 (no. 8).
- 28 For the role of lexical lists in scribal training, see Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*, 241–44, 306–7, 280–86.
- 29 This survey is mostly drawn from Wentz, “Scribes,” 2215–17. See also Lesko, “Literature, Literacy, and Literati”; James, *Pharaoh’s People*, 136–51; Roccati, “Scribes,” 70–71; Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*, 259–67; Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*; McDowell, “Teachers and Students.”
- 30 Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:1093 (no. 2); Selbitschka, “I Write,” 437–39.
- 31 This estimate is from Loewe, *Men Who Governed*, 69–71. He bases this figure on an extrapolation of the number of officials serving in Donghai, correlated with the national figure of 130,285 for 5 BCE given in the *Han shu* (19A.743), emended in Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 155, 205n1.
- 32 Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 131.
- 33 For the official transcription of this diary, see Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan, *Yinwan Han mu jianpu*, 138–44; For detailed annotation, see Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 15–109.
- 34 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 32, slip no. 25-4.

- 35 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 35, slip nos. 37-5, 38-5.
- 36 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 37, slip no. 64-5.
- 37 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 36, slip no. 48-5.
- 38 Following Loewe, *Men Who Governed*, 58.
- 39 For an examination of the texts inventoried for his tomb, see Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 187–202.
- 40 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 38, slip nos. 47-6, 51, 52-6.
- 41 Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 39, slip no. 60-6, I follow the interpretation of Loewe, *Men Who Governed*, 56.
- 42 On the greeting tablets, see Liu Hongshi, “Ye, ci kaoshu”; Korolkov, “Greeting Tablets”; Loewe, *Men Who Governed*, 50–53.
- 43 The scholarship on Qenherkhepeshef is extensive, much of it based on foundational work by Černý, *Community*, 329–37; Černý, “Will of Naunakhte.” The most recent assessment is Donker van Heel, *Mrs. Naunakhte*, 21–48. See also Romer, *Ancient Lives*, 32–36, 41–45, 73–77, 68–72; Lesko, “Literature, Literacy, and Literati,” 131–44; Davies, *Who’s Who*, 84–86; McDowell, “Awareness of the Past”; Pestman, “Who Were the Owners”; Andreu and Barbotin, *Les artistes de pharaon*, 58–64. For a listing of ostraca and papyri written by him, see Donker van Heel and Haring, *Writing in a Workmen’s Village*, 41–44.
- 44 Černý, *Community*, 325–26.
- 45 He is first mentioned in Ostrakon British Museum 5634. This is a list of absences from work at the tomb, where some workers were busy “carrying stones for Qenherkhepeshef.” See Janssen, “Absence from Work.”
- 46 For the responsibilities of the scribe of the royal tomb, see Černý, *Community*, 191–93; Bierbrier, *Tomb-Builders*, 32–33.
- 47 Černý, *Community*, 224. The scribe of the royal tomb was paid half the rations of the foreman.
- 48 His residence appears to have been house NE VIII at Deir el-Medina. See Donker van Heel, *Mrs. Naunakhte*, 28, fig. 4. It was previously occupied by his predecessor, Ramose.
- 49 His seat at the halfway camp lodgings (house R) was inscribed, “The scribe of pharaoh in the Place of Truth, Ramose. His son, who makes his name live, Qenherkhepeshef.” See Bruyère, *Rapport*, 3:354 and plate XXXIX; The inscription at the entrance of KV 8 (graffiti number 1400) reads, “The sitting place of the scribe Qenherkhepeshef.” See Donker van Heel, *Mrs. Naunakhte*, 37–38.
- 50 Parahotep’s complaint (Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 303) is transcribed in Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca*, 4:16, plate 18; translated in Černý, *Community*, 337.
- 51 See Černý, *Community*, 331–32; in Papyrus Salt 124 (Papyrus British Museum 10055), he is accused of covering up the crimes of the notorious Paneb; in Ostrakon Gardiner 197 (Ostrakon Ashmolean 197), he is said to have accepted a bribe (and a free shave) from another worker to cover up his misdeeds. See transcription in Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*, 4:159, lines 12–15.
- 52 Donker van Heel, *Mrs. Naunakhte*, 28.
- 53 See Pestman, “Who Were the Owners.”
- 54 Papyrus Chester Beatty III (P. British Museum EA 10683), verso. They are discussed and published in Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 1:23–24, 2: plates 9–10a.
- 55 The king list (Ostrakon Cairo 25646) is translated in McDowell, *Village Life*, 162–63. Sixteen of Ramesses’ sons are listed in his hand on Ostrakon Carnarvon 301 (Ostrakon Cairo JdE 72503).
- 56 The offering table is depicted in Andreu and Barbotin, *Les artistes de pharaon*, 227, no. 182; discussed by McDowell, “Awareness of the Past.”
- 57 Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists*, 51–54.
- 58 The charm against Sehaqeq (P. British Museum EA 10731) is translated and studied in Edwards, “Qenḥikhopshef’s Prophylactic Charm.” The dream book (Papyrus Chester Beatty III, recto; also known as P. British Museum, EA10683) is transcribed and translated in Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 1:9–23, 2: plates 5–12a. See also McDowell, *Village Life*, 110–13. The dream book was not written or copied by Qenherkhepeshef, but was clearly in his library since he copied the Kadash account and a letter draft on

the verso. Later colophons were added by Qenherkhepeshef's widow's next husband, as well as their son.

- 59 Černý, *Community*, 335; Ostrakon Cairo 25760; Ostrakon Carnarvon 300 [M, N, O] (Ostrakon Cairo 72502).
- 60 Translation from Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 432–33. For the Egyptian text, see Helck, *Die Lehre des Dw3-ḥtj*, 1:19–25 (II), 35–38 (IV). See also Hoch, “Teaching of Dua-Kheti.”
- 61 Translation from Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*, 282–83, text 6.3 (with modifications). See original text fragments from the Dunhuang site, Gansu Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Dunhuang Han jian*, 1:274, slip nos. 1459A, 1459B, 1460A, 1460B, 1461A, 1461B, plate no. 133. See also Bottéro, “Les ‘manuels de caractères.’ ”
- 62 Translation from Forke, *Lun-heng*, 2:73 (with modifications). For the original text, see Wang Chong, *Lunheng jiaoshi*, 2:12.552.
- 63 See Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 1:89–109.
- 64 Wente, “Scribes,” 2219. But see also Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 235–77.
- 65 This was suggested by Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*, 288–89; Hunter, *Confucius*, has shown that the text did not exist in its current form before the Western Han.
- 66 The *Instructions of Amennakht* is principally known from Ostrakon British Museum 41541; translated by McDowell, *Village Life*, 139–40 (text no. 102). Seven partial copies by students are known, and they name Amennakht as the author. For a recent study, see Bickel and Mathieu, “l’Écrivain Amennakht.” Amennakht may have been the author of other works he signed as well, including a literary letter (O. Gardiner 25 verso; McDowell, *Village Life*, no. 106), verses in praise of Thebes (O. Gardiner 25 recto; McDowell, *Village Life*, no. 112), a hymn on the coronation of Ramesses IV (O. Turin 57001 recto; McDowell, *Village Life*, no. 113), another hymn to Ramesses IV or V (O. Hermitage 1125 recto), and a hymn to Ptah (O. Turin 57002). For more on Amennakht and his scribal descendants, see Romer, *Ancient Lives*, 106–23; Černý, *Community*, 339–83.
- 67 See Wang Haicheng, *Writing and the Ancient State*, 272–74.
- 68 BM EA10684. Translated in McDowell, *Village Life*, 136–38 (text no. 101; with modification). For photo and translation, see Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 1:38–39, 2: plates 18–19. The text was probably composed during the late Eighteenth Dynasty, but the copy dates to the late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Dynasties. It is uncertain when it entered Qenherkhepeshef's library. See also Lesko, “Literature, Literacy, and Literati,” 138–44.
- 69 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 62.2725–36; Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, 227–37. For a recent translation and study, see Durrant, Li, Nylan, and van Ess, *Letter to Ren An*.
- 70 Thote, “Daybooks”; Selbitschka, “I Write,” 432, 453, 458.
- 71 Selbitschka, “I Write,” 460, 465.
- 72 Winlock, “Egyptian Expedition.”; Winlock, *Excavations at Deir El Bahri*, 17–30; Roehrig, “Life Along the Nile.”
- 73 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*.
- 74 Winlock, “Egyptian Expedition,” 31–32.
- 75 Roehrig, “Life Along the Nile,” 14. Roehrig suggests that Wah might have been depicted among the models of Meketre, as the figure by his side on one of the boats (20, fig. 24).
- 76 Winlock, “Discovery of Egyptian Jewelry.”
- 77 Winlock, “Mummy of Wah Unwrapped.”
- 78 Roehrig, “Life Along the Nile,” 7–8.
- 79 A scarab ring found in her coffin names the herald, Reniseneb, which ties this couple closely to the court. However, Carter stylistically dates this scarab to the Thirteenth Dynasty, suggesting it was an heirloom. See Carnarvon, *Five Years' Explorations*, 69.
- 80 See Carnarvon, *Five Years' Explorations*, 74.
- 81 See Carnarvon, *Five Years' Explorations*, 75–77, 90–93, plates LXXVI–LXXVIII.
- 82 Smith, “Intact Tombs” 208–9.
- 83 The official excavation report is Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin Mu Bianxiezhu, *Yunmeng*

- 84 These are published in Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujuan Zhengli Xiaozu, *Shuihudi*.
85 Following Chen Kanli, “Shuihuidi Qin jian.”
86 See note 42; Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 145–68.
87 See Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan, *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, 129–32; Cai Wanjin, *Yinwan*, 187–97.
88 See Selbitschka, “I Write,” 463–64.
89 Roehrig, “Life Along the Nile,” 15.
90 Smith, “Intact Tombs,” 209.
91 Lullo, “Toiletry Case Sets.”
92 See Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan, *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, plates 24–26; Sun Ji, *Handai*, 472.
93 Lai Guolong, “Death and the Otherworldly Journey.”
94 Smith, “Intact Tombs,” 209.
95 Lai Guolong, *Excavating the Afterlife*, 137–45.
96 Loewe, “Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents,” 190–91.
97 Tomiya Itaru, *Kōryō Chōkasan*, 2:16–17.
98 Harper, “Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts,” 227–28.
99 Thote, “Daybooks,” 35.
100 See examples in Pinarello, *Archaeological Discussion*, 28–100.
101 Davies, *Tomb of the Vizier Ramose*, plate XXVI.
102 Depicted in Hawass, *King Tutankhamun*, 206–7. Since the inscription on the palette records his earlier name of Tutankhaten and shows signs of use, it may have been the actual palette with which he gained his literacy.
103 As suggested by Smith, “Intact Tombs,” 217.
104 Carter, Derry, and Burton, *Tomb of Tut.Ankh.Amen*, 3:68, 79–81. For a study of the writing implements and their association with Tutankhamen, see Allon and Navrátilová, *Ancient Egyptian Scribes*, 67–76; Pinarello, *Archaeological Discussion*, 43–45.
105 Allen, *Pyramid Texts*, 59 (Unas spell no. 214), 153 (Pepi spell no. 449).
106 Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight*, 213 (chap. 94).
107 Selbitschka, “I Write,” 458.
108 Selbitschka, “I Write,” (431n65) attributes the terminology of “occasion text” to Martin Kern and that of “tradition texts” to Matthias Richter.
109 Allon, “Writing Hand”; Scott, “Scribe Statue.”

CHAPTER 6: PROVIDING A MODEL AFTERLIFE

- 1 Pillsbury et al., *Design for Eternity*, 6–9; Kampp-Seyfried and Jung, *China und Ägypten*, 24–39.
2 The burials with human sacrifice are found in the Early Dynastic cemeteries of Abydos and Saqqara. When the Saqqara burials were first discovered by Emery, he ascribed them to the same kings of the First and Second Dynasties for which tombs at Abydos were already known. See Emery, *Excavations at Saqqara* and Emery, “Preliminary Report,” 3–8. Scholars have since reinterpreted the Saqqara tombs as the tombs of the highest elites of the First and Second Dynasty kings. See Dodson, *Monarchs*, 11–20.
3 Roth, “Menial Labor,” 106.
4 Breasted, *Egyptian Servant Statues*.
5 Roth, “Menial Labor,” 104.
6 Most servant statues are uninscribed. For a discussion of the few inscribed examples, see Roth, “Menial Labor.”
7 Tooley, “Middle Kingdom,” 1:5.
8 Breasted, *Egyptian Servant Statues*, 10, plate 9a.
9 For a discussion of the geographic and stylistic expansion of tomb models, see Tooley, “Middle Kingdom,” 6–17; Eschenbrenner-Diemer, “From the Workshop to the Grave.”
10 Petrie and Brunton, *Sedment I*, 2–7, plate xi.
11 For a discussion of this dating problem, see Tooley, “Middle Kingdom,” 18–21.

- 12 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 29.
- 13 The distribution of excavated models covers most of the Nile Valley, except the Delta, where little organic material survives.
- 14 Van De Mieroop, *History of Ancient Egypt*, 106–7.
- 15 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 67.
- 16 Stevenson-Smith, *Art and Architecture*, 219, fig. 214.
- 17 Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamen*, 83, figs. 43, 47, plate XXVa.
- 18 Garstang, *Burial Customs*, 68–78.
- 19 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*, 13.
- 20 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*, 17–19.
- 21 Freed et al., *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, 151.
- 22 Freed, *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, 152.
- 23 Freed, *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, 152–54.
- 24 Arnold, *Tempel des Königs Mentuhotep*, 44.
- 25 Reeves, *Complete Tutankhamun*, 142–45.
- 26 Wu Hung, "Art and Architecture," 734, 739. See report in Li Yuexun, "Shandong Zhangqiu nùlangshan"; illustrated in color in Wu Hung, *Yellow Springs*, fig. 106.
- 27 This narrative is mostly drawn from Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines"; Rawson, "Thinking in Pictures," 19–37; Selbitschka, "Miniature Tomb Figurines."
- 28 Selbitschka, "Quotidian Afterlife."
- 29 Rawson, "Thinking in Pictures," 20–24; Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, chap. 6.
- 30 Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan, *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, 162–63.
- 31 See Jinan Shi Bowuguan, "Shitan Jinan Wuyingshan." The tomb was the largest of the excavated group at 3.76 m long, but was certainly not large enough to suggest a noble's tomb. Because it was excavated during the Cultural Revolution, the exact context of this model within the tomb was not recorded nor precisely reported, just said to be "near the deceased."
- 32 For the procession scene and bird tableau, see Beningson and Liu, *Providing for the Afterlife*, 34–36.
- 33 For a typological overview of Han architectural models, see Guo Qinghua, *Mingqi Pottery*. For the largest collection, see Henan Bowuyuan, ed., *Henan chutu Handai jianzhu mingqi*.
- 34 Huaiyang Xian Bowuguan, "Huaiyang chutu"; Zhoukou Diqu Wenhuaaju Wenwu Deng, eds., "Huaiyang yuzhuang," 1–3; Guo Qinghua, *Mingqi Pottery*, 24–26, fig. 1.25; Henan Bowuyuan, *Henan chutu Handai jianzhu mingqi*, 148, no. 29: 170–71.
- 35 Hunan Sheng Bowuguan and Zhongguo Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, eds., *Changsha Mawangdui*, 1:97–101.
- 36 Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 26–27, 35. See Fu Juyou, *Mawangdui*, 44–47.
- 37 For the excavation report, see Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo and Hebei Sheng Wenwu Guanlichu, eds., *Mancheng*. For an interpretive monograph, see Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*.
- 38 Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 30–32.
- 39 For descriptions of the figurines, see Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo and Hebei Sheng Wenwu Guanlichu, *Mancheng*, 100, 140, 206–7; For interpretations of the jade figurine, see Wu Hung, "Prince of Jade Revisited"; Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, 39.
- 40 The relationship between the horizontal tomb and the use of tableau of figurines is developed by Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, chap. 6. See also Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 27, 29–32.
- 41 The literature related to the First Emperor's tomb is extensive, but reliable overviews can be found in Portal, *First Emperor*; Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things*, 51–73; Rawson, "Power of Images," 123–54. The best synthesis in Chinese is Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*.
- 42 Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 6.265.
- 43 Portal, *First Emperor*, 136–37, figs. 142–43.
- 44 Portal, *First Emperor*, 156–57, figs. 160–61; Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*, 179–97. For the argument in favor of Western influence, see Nickel, "The First Emperor and Sculpture in China."

- 45 Portal, *First Emperor*, 192–203, figs. 194–200.
- 46 Portal, *First Emperor*, 152, fig. 157; Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*, 198–214.
- 47 Portal, *First Emperor*, 139, fig. 146; Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*, 145–47.
- 48 Portal, *First Emperor*, 159–80; Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*, 225–70.
- 49 Portal, *First Emperor*, 37–39, figs. 23–24, 154, fig. 159; Yuan Zhongyi, *Qin Shihuang ling*, 113–29.
- 50 For an overview of the finds from Yangling, see Han Yangling Bowuguan, ed., *Han Yangling Bowuguan*. For an archaeological overview of the sacrificial pits, see Jiao Nanfeng, “Han Yangling.”
- 51 See Rawson, “Power of Images,” 149.
- 52 For a preliminary report, see Shaanxi Kaogu Yanjiuyuan, ed., “Han Yangling diling dongce.”
- 53 This is argued by Miller, *Kingly Splendor*, chap. 3.
- 54 Wu Hung, *Yellow Springs* (101), suggests that already by the time of the Mawangdui tombs (ca. 168 BCE), figures depicted in painted murals were seen as the equivalent of buried figurines. He points to the inventory in tomb number 3 which mentions 856 servant figures. The tomb only contained 104 figures, but a painted silk mural on a wall of the tomb portrayed many servants.
- 55 Clayton, *Chronicles*, 22.
- 56 Clayton, *Chronicle*, 23. For the Early Dynastic Abydos cemeteries, see O’Connor, *Abydos*, 137–81.
- 57 See K. C. Chang, *Shang Civilization*, 110–24; Bagley, “Shang Archaeology,” 183–94; for the excavation report see, Liang Siyong and Gao Quxun, *Houjiazhuang*.
- 58 Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*.
- 59 Rawson, “Power of Images,” 130.
- 60 Rawson, “Thinking in Pictures,” 20, 24.
- 61 Rawson, “Power of Images,” 137–38.
- 62 Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 1:62–63 (CT 67), 2:193–94 (CT 599, 604), 276 (CT 725), 3:58–59 (CT 906, 908, 917), 65–66 (CT 923, 924), 71–75 (CT 936), 81 (CT 942).
- 63 Niwiński, “Plateaux d’offrandes,” 82.
- 64 Selbitschka, “Quotidian Afterlife,” 94–95, 97.
- 65 Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 2:106–7, no. 472. This spell is found on several Middle Kingdom coffins but also directly inscribed on some early Middle Kingdom *shabtis*. This spell evolves into chapter 6 of the *Book of the Dead*, and is widely employed in the New Kingdom, and afterward. See Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight*, 21–22; Scalf, *Book of the Dead*, 319.
- 66 Selbitschka, “Miniature Tomb Figurines,” 29–34.
- 67 Selbitschka, “Miniature Tomb Figurines,” 38; Nyord, “What Can an Image Do?”
- 68 Selbitschka, “Miniature Tomb Figurines,” 40.
- 69 For a discussion of Egyptian tomb models functioning as analogistic spaces, see Nyord, “What Can an Image Do?”
- 70 For a discussion of becoming an Osiris during the Middle Kingdom, see Smith, *Following Osiris*, 166–270. In recent years the narrative of “democratization of the afterlife” (where symbols of royal ritual trickled down to lower class tombs) has been seriously challenged. See Hays, “Death of the Democratisation.”
- 71 Snape, *Ancient Egyptian Tombs*, 117–35, 144–47. For a discussion of New Kingdom Osirian beliefs, see Smith, *Following Osiris*, 271–355.
- 72 See also Tooley, “Middle Kingdom,” 378–80.
- 73 Henan Sheng Bowuguan, ed., “Lingbao Zhangwan Han mu.” This inscription was on a pot in a large multichambered Eastern Han-period brick tomb. The owner was probably a wealthy landowner, but the “20 million coin” claim was a fancifully large number.
- 74 Huan Kuan, *Yantielun*, 1:353. Translation by Anthony Barbieri-Low.
- 75 Wu Hung, “On Tomb Figurines,” 25.
- 76 Wu Hung, “On Tomb Figurines,” 24–27.
- 77 Guo Qinghua, *Mingqi Pottery*, 165–66.
- 78 Tooley, “Middle Kingdom,” 123–26, 225–42, 300–303, 311–14, 317–19, 322–28, 329–33, 335–38, 349–50, 384–86.

- 79 Following the argument of Arnold, "Amenemhat I."
- 80 Freed, *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, 153–54, 177.
- 81 Barbieri-Low, *Artisans*, 10–17; Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, 82–83.
- 82 This follows the arguments of Miller, *Kingly Splendor*.
- 83 Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Hanchengdui, ed., "Han Chang'an cheng yaozhi fajue baogao." Based on kiln sizes, this workshop could have made eight thousand figurines per firing. It probably dates to after Emperor Jing's reign, though.
- 84 Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Hancheng Gongzuodui, ed., "Han Chang'an cheng yihao yaozhi"; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Hancheng Gongzuodui, ed., "Han Chang'an cheng 23–27 yaozhi."
- 85 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 381–82.
- 86 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life* (75–77), thought the two residence models were made at the same workshop, the butcher shop (E) and the bakery and brewery (G) at a second shop, and the granary (F) and carpentry shop (J) at a third. He believed the boats display the work of as many as four different workshops or masters.
- 87 Tooley, *Egyptian Models*, 19.
- 88 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 373–75.
- 89 Snape, *Ancient Egyptian Tombs*, 163–65.
- 90 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 376–77.
- 91 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 375–76.
- 92 The tomb of her son (no. 3) had 104 servant figurines. The husband's tomb (no. 2) was heavily looted, so it is unclear if it also had figurines.
- 93 For the relationship between the tombs of Liu Sheng and Dou Wan, see Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, chap. 2.
- 94 Selbitschka, "Quotidian Afterlife" (92), reports eighteen male tombs and five female tombs had granary models.
- 95 For these terracotta armies, see Miller, *Kingly Splendor*, chap. 3. The only female ruler of the Han was Empress Lü, whose tomb has not been explored.
- 96 This follows the argument of Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 30–32.
- 97 Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 32–38.
- 98 Riggs, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt*.
- 99 Snape, *Ancient Egyptian Tombs*, 190–96; Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 299–329.
- 100 For references, see Shi Jie, *Modeling Peace*, chap. 6.
- 101 Greiff and Yin Shenping, *Das Grab des Bin Wang*, 65.
- 102 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 76–83; Tooley, *Egyptian Models*, 13–14.
- 103 Garstang, *Burial Customs*, 65–79.
- 104 Tooley, "Middle Kingdom" (77), argues that placing the models in a separate chamber was an insurance policy, in case the main burial chamber was destroyed.
- 105 Rawson, "Thinking in Pictures," 21–27.
- 106 For the outer coffin of Djehutynakht and its offering lists, see Berman, "Coffins and Canopic Chests," 105–35. For some Coffin Text spells that provided nearly unlimited food, see Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 1:62–63, no. 67; 2:193, no. 599; 2:194, no. 604; 2:276–77, no. 725; 3:58–59, no. 906; 3:59, no. 908; 3:63, no. 917; 3:65, no. 923; 3:66, no. 924; 3:70–72, no. 936.
- 107 Depicted on a fragment in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession no. 20.3.162).
- 108 DeLong, "Phenomenological Space-Time."
- 109 Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines*, 26–44; Foxhall, "Introduction: Miniaturization," 3–4.
- 110 Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines," 25.
- 111 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*, 77–79.
- 112 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life* (76) suggests that the models of Meketre and his son were made by different craftsmen than the ones who made the rowers and attendants on the boats.
- 113 See Freed, *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, 148, figs. 111, 112.
- 114 D'Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig, *Mummies and Magic*, catalog no. 36; Tooley, *Egyptian Models*, 22–23. For detailed analysis, see Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 175–248. Tooley (245) notes that in some tombs, the offering-bearers evolved to represent actual named maidservants of the deceased's estate.

- 115 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*, 39–43, plates 4, 5, 30, 31. One of these is in the Met, the other in the Cairo Egyptian Museum.
- 116 These are the interpretations of Catharine Roehrig in Oppenheim et al., *Ancient Egypt Transformed*, 226–27, no. 163.
- 117 Winlock, *Models of Daily Life*, 76.
- 118 Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines*, 32.
- 119 For the expression of mourner models, see Oppenheim, *Ancient Egypt Transformed*, 223, no. 160.

CHAPTER 7: GAMING THE WAY TO PARADISE

- 1 Allen, *Pyramid Texts*, 5, 7.
- 2 Frankfort, *Kingship*, 61–78.
- 3 Taylor, *Journey*, 17.
- 4 Taylor, *Journey*, 100–101.
- 5 Allen, “Egyptian Concept of the World,” 23–30; Taylor, *Journey*, 132–34; Hornung, *Books of the Afterlife*.
- 6 Allen, *Pyramid Texts*, 43–44.
- 7 Hornung, *Books of the Afterlife*, 7–12; Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*.
- 8 Hays, “Transformation of Context”; Lesko, “The Field of Hetep.”
- 9 Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 2:90–92 (spell no. 464; with modification).
- 10 It is still called the Marsh of Offerings in the associated text.
- 11 Baines, “Watery Egyptian Landscapes.”
- 12 Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 2:93–94 (spell no. 466); Buck and Gardiner, *Coffin Texts*, 5:352–62; Taylor, *Journey*, 242–44.
- 13 Hornung, *Books of the Afterlife*, 13–22; Taylor, *Journey*; Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight*.
- 14 Brandon, *Judgment of the Dead*; Taylor, *Journey*, 204–17.
- 15 Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight*, 240–41. Spell number 109 appears to be directly descended from Coffin Text number 159, which gives similar dimensions for the enormous plants in the Marsh of Reeds. See Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, 1:137–38; spell number 149 of the *Book of the Dead* contains a similar description.
- 16 This follows Taylor, *Journey*, 242–45; Compare the different reading of Hodel-Hoenes, *Life and Death*, 253–55.
- 17 Robinson, “Ritual Landscapes.”
- 18 Taylor, *Journey*, 240–41.
- 19 Taylor, *Journey*, 243. Spell number 149 of the *Book of the Dead* suggests that Re travels in his barque through the Marsh of Reeds, stops while the deceased gathers his provisions there, then exits out the horizon at sunrise.
- 20 Assmann, *Search for God*, 77.
- 21 Yü Ying-shih, “O Soul, Come Back!”
- 22 Brashier, “Han Thanatology”; Mu-chou Poo, *Personal Welfare*, 62–66, 157–70.
- 23 Following the argument of Lai Guolong, *Excavating the Afterlife*, chap. 5.
- 24 This interpretation follows Ruitenbeek, *Chinese Shadows*, 10–11. The female deity would be the Queen Mother of the West, and the male deity would be the King Father of the East.
- 25 My account follows the prevailing interpretation of Loewe (*Ways to Paradise*) and Wu Hung (*The Wu Liang Shrine*). Sun Ji, “Xianfan youming zhijian,” dissents from this view and argues that there were no postmortem paradises in the Chinese religious imagination before Buddhism.
- 26 Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*.
- 27 Major, *Heaven and Earth*, 150–56.
- 28 Translation from Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 156 (modified).
- 29 Ruitenbeek, *Chinese Shadows*, 30; Lai Guolong, “Lighting the Way.”
- 30 Wu Hung, *Wu Liang Shrine*, 120–26.
- 31 Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, 89; Watson, *Zhuangzi*, 46.
- 32 Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, 90. Translation from Birrell, *Mountains and Seas*, 24.

- 33 Dubs, "Ancient Chinese Mystery Cult"; C. V. Hsü, "Queen Mother of the West," 57–58.
- 34 Knauer, "Influence of Western Prototypes," 62.
- 35 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 27Ba.1476. Translation from Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, 99 (with minor modifications).
- 36 These ideas were expressed well by Kendall, *Passing through the Netherworld*, 3.
- 37 For archaeological and textual sources for *liubo*, see Fu Juyou, "Qin Han shiqi de boju"; Huang Ruxuan, "Liubo qiju." For recent syntheses, see MacKenzie, "Liubo"; Selbitschka, "Tricky Game."
- 38 The only slip published so far from this text is in Jiangxi Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, ed., *Wuse xuanyao*, 187; analyzed in Wang Chuning and Yang Jun, "Haihun Hou mu."
- 39 Selbitschka, "Tricky Game," argues that the game was predominantly a "profane" pastime, supported by its inclusion in tombs with items associated with banqueting rather than with ritual items.
- 40 For laws against playing *liubo* for money, see Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, 2:615. For the rebellion, see Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 1: 403–22.
- 41 Translated in Tseng, "Representation and Appropriation," 178.
- 42 Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, 60–85.
- 43 The most thorough study of *senet* is Piccione, "Historical Development." For shorter articles, see Piccione, "In Search of the Meaning of Senet"; Piccione, "Egyptian Game of *senet*." The work of Timothy Kendall is also influential. See his "Games," 263–65; Kendall published a booklet on the history of *senet*, along with a complete reconstruction of the playing rules in *Passing Through the Netherworld*.
- 44 For Tutankhamen's game boards, see Tait, *Game-Boxes*.
- 45 Kendall, *Passing through the Netherworld*, 16; Piccione, "Historical Development," 73–79.
- 46 Illustrated and translated in Piankoff, *Wandering of the Soul*, 119–20; translated with notes in Kendall, *Passing through the Netherworld*, 55–58. The most detailed study is Piccione, "Historical Development," 96–153.
- 47 Piccione, "Historical Development."
- 48 Lai Guolong, *Excavating the Afterlife*, 187.
- 49 Alford, "Elysion"; Griffith, "Sailing to Elysium."
- 50 For the Elysian scene in the Octavii tomb, see Donati and Palazzo del podestà, *Romana pictura*, 175, plate 63. For an Elysian paradise scene in the catacomb of Vibia, see Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, 132.
- 51 Brandon, *Judgment of the Dead*, 31.

EPILOGUE

- 1 Rosenstein, "War, State Formation," 30.
- 2 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*.
- 3 Lehner, "Fractal House."
- 4 Chen Wei, *Liye Qin jiandu*, 155–60.
- 5 Loewe, "Organs of Han Imperial Government," 510.
- 6 Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy*.
- 7 Posener, "Découverte."
- 8 Falkenhausen, "Ahnenkult und Grabkult"; Lai Guolong, *Excavating the Afterlife*.

WORKS CITED

ABBREVIATIONS

~~AHR~~ *American Historical Review*
~~AJAR~~ *American Journal of Archaeology*
~~AUC~~ *American University in Cairo*
~~ASOR~~ *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
~~IFAO~~ *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
~~BO~~ *Biblioteca Orientalis*
~~MFEA~~ *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*
Early China
~~EES~~ *Egyptian Exploration Society*
~~HAS~~ *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
~~IFAO~~ *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
~~JAO~~ *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
~~JARC~~ *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
~~JE~~ *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
~~JESHO~~ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
~~JHS~~ *Journal of Hellenic Studies*
~~JIES~~ *Journal of Indo-European Studies*
~~JNCBS~~ *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
~~JNES~~ *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
~~JSAI~~ *Journal for the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*
~~MDAIK~~ *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*
~~MAA~~ *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*
~~MAJ~~ *Metropolitan Museum Journal*
~~NIOO~~ *Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten*
~~OIP~~ *Oriental Institute Museum Publications*
~~SAK~~ *Schriften zur Altägyptischen Kultur*
~~SOS~~ *School of Oriental and African Studies*
~~SNY~~ *State University of New York*
~~ZAS~~ *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

- Adams, Robert McC. *Land Behind Baghdad: A History of Settlement on the Diyala Plains*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Adshead, S. A. M. *China in World History*. 3rd ed. London: Palgrave, 2000.
- Aldred, Cyril. *Akhenaten: King of Egypt*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988.
- Alford, Garth. "Elysion, A Foreign Eschatological Concept in Homer's Odyssey." *JIES* 19, nos. 1–2 (1991): 151–61.
- Allam, Shafik. *Das Verfahrensrecht in Der altägyptischen Arbeitersiedlung Von Deir El-Medineh*. Tübingen: Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1973.
- _____. *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*. Tübingen: Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1973.
- Allen, James P. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature,

- . “The Egyptian Concept of the World.” In *Mysterious Lands*, edited by David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke, 23–30. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- . *The Heqanakht Papyri*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002.
- Allon, Niv. “The Writing Hand and the Seated Baboon: Tension and Balance in Statue Mma 29.2.16.” *JARCE* 49, no. 1 (2013): 93–112.
- Allon, Niv, and Hana Navrátilová. *Ancient Egyptian Scribes: A Cultural Exploration*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Andreu, Guillemette, and Christophe Barbotin. *Les artistes de pharaon: Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois*. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002.
- Arnold, Dieter. *Der Tempel des Königs Mentuhotep von Deir el-Bahari*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1974.
- Arnold, Dorothea. “Amenemhat I and the Early Twelfth Dynasty at Thebes.” *MMJ* 26 (1991): 5–48.
- . *The Royal Women of Amarna: Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996.
- Artzi, Pinhas. “The Influence of Political Marriages on the International Relations of the Amarna Age.” In *La Femme dans Le Proche-Orient antique*, edited by J. M. Durand, 23–26. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1987.
- Assmann, Jan. *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*. Translated by David Lorton. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- . *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism*. Translated by Anthony Alcock. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- . *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*. New York: Henry Holt, 2002.
- . *Moses the Egyptian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- . “Nilhymnus.” In *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, edited by Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, 4:489–96. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–1992.
- . *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- . *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Bagley, Robert W. “Shang Archaeology.” In *Cambridge History of Ancient China*, edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, 124–231. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Bailey, Douglass. *Prehistoric Figurines: Representation and Corporeality in the Neolithic*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Baines, John. “Civilizations and Empires: A Perspective on Erligang from Early Egypt.” In *Art and Archaeology of the Erligang Civilization*, edited by Kyle Steinke and Dora C. Y. Ching, 99–119. Princeton: Tang Center for East Asian Art, 2014.
- . *Fecundity Figures: Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre*. Reprint. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2001 [1985].
- . “On the Background of Wenamun in Inscriptional Genres and in Topoi of Obligations among Rulers.” In *Texte, Theben, Tonfragmente: Festschrift für Günter Burkard*, edited by Dieter Kessler, Regine Schulz, Martina Ullmann, Alexandra Verbovsek, and Stefan Wimmer, 27–36. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009.
- . “On Wenamun as a Literary Text.” In *Literatur und Politik im pharaonischen und ptolemäischen Ägypten: Vorträge der Tagung zum Gedenken an Georges Posener 5.–10. September 1996 in Leipzig*, edited by Jan Assmann and Elke Blumenthal, 209–33. Cairo: IFAO, 1999.
- . “Watery Egyptian Landscapes and Performances within Them.” In *Ritual Landscape and Performance. Proceedings of the International Conference on Ritual Landscape and Performance, Yale University, September 23–24, 2016*, edited by Christina Geisen, 177–203. New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptology, 2020.
- Baines, John, and Christopher Eyre. “Four Notes on Literacy.” *Göttinger Miszellen* 61 (1983): 65–95.
- Baker, Timothy Danforth. “An Archaeology of History: The Wang Mang Nine Temples from Early Imperial China as Reconstructed by History and by Archaeology.” *History and*

- Anthropology* 24, no. 3 (2013): 380–97.
- Balazs, Étienne. *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Ban Gu 班固. *Han shu* 漢書. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962.
- Barbieri-Low, Anthony J. *Artisans in Early Imperial China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.
- . “The Organization of Imperial Workshops during the Han Dynasty.” PhD diss., Princeton University, 2001.
- Barbieri-Low, Anthony J., and Robin D. S. Yates. *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb no. 247*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Barbotin, Christophe. “Le buste du scribe royal Meniou, une sculpture du règne d’Aménophis III (v. 1391–1353 av. J.-C.).” *La Revue du Louvre et des musées de France* 47, nos. 5–6 (1997): 51–57.
- Barfield, Thomas J. *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.
- Beck, Hans, and Griet Vankeerberghen, eds. *Rulers and Ruled in Ancient Greece, Rome, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Bedell, E. D. “Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period.” PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1973.
- Bell, Barbara. “The Dark Ages in Ancient History: I. The First Dark Age in Egypt.” *AJA* 75 (1971): 1–26.
- Beningson, Susan L., and Cary Y. Liu. *Providing for the Afterlife: Brilliant Artifacts from Shandong*. New York: China Institute Gallery, 2005.
- Berman, Lawrence M. “The Coffins and Canopic Chests of Tomb 10A.” In *Secrets of Tomb 10A*, edited by Rita E. Freed et al., 105–35. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications, 2009.
- Bickel S., and B. Mathieu. “L’Écrivain Amennakht et son Enseignement.” *BIFAO* 93 (1993): 31–51.
- Bielenstein, Hans. *The Bureaucracy of Han Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- . “The Census of China during the Period 2–742 A.D.” *BMFEA* 19 (1947): 125–63.
- . “The Restoration of the Han Dynasty [I]: With Prolegomena on the Historiography of the Hou Han Shu.” *BMFEA* 26 (1954): 1–209.
- . “Wang Mang, the Restoration of the Han Dynasty, and Later Han.” In *Cambridge History of China*, edited by Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, 1:223–90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Bierbrier, Morris. *The Tomb-Builders of the Pharaohs*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1989.
- Birrell, Anne, trans. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. New York: Penguin, 1999.
- Blankenberg-van Delden, C. *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep*. Leiden: Brill, 1969.
- Boltz, William G. “The Zhouli.” In *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide*, edited by Michael Loewe, 67–76. Berkeley: Institute for East Asian Studies, 1993.
- Bonneau, Danielle. *La Crue du Nil, Divinité Égyptienne, À Travers Mille Ans D’histoire (332 Av.-641 Ap. J.-C.) D’après Les Auteurs Grecs et Latins, et Latins, et Les Documents des Époques Ptolémaïque, Romaine et Byzantine*. Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1964.
- Borchardt, Ludwig. “Nachträge zu ‘Nilmesser und Nilstandsmarken.’ ” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 11 (1934): 194–202.
- Bottéro, Françoise. “Les ‘manuels de caractères’ à l’époque des Han Occidentaux.” In *Education et Instruction en Chine*, edited by Christine Nguyen Tri and Catherine Despeux, 99–120. Paris: Peeters, 2003.
- Brandon, Samuel. *The Judgment of the Dead: An Historical and Comparative Study of the Idea of a Post-mortem Judgement in the Major Religions*. London: Weidenfeld, 1967.
- Brashier, K. E. “Han Thanatology and the Division of Souls.” *EC* 21 (1996): 125–58.
- Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, translated by Sian Reynolds. 2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

- Breasted, James Henry. *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1905.
- Breasted, James Henry, Jr. *Egyptian Servant Statues*. Washington, DC: Bollingen Foundation, 1948.
- Brunner, Hellmut. *Altägyptische Erziehung*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1957.
- Bruyère, Bernard. *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Medineh, 1934–1935*. Cairo: IFAO, 1939.
- Bryan, Betsy M. "The Egyptian Perspective on Mitanni." In *Amarna Diplomacy*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 71–84. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- . "The Eighteenth Dynasty before Amarna." In *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Ian Shaw, 218–71. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . *The Reign of Thutmose IV*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Buck, Adriaan de. "On the Meaning of the Name *H'PJ*." In *Orientalia Neerlandica: A Volume of Oriental Studies*, edited by Netherlands' Oriental Society, 1–22. Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1948.
- Buck, Adriaan de, and Alan Gardiner. *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.
- Butzer, Karl W. *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt: A Study in Cultural Ecology*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976.
- . "Irrigation." In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford, 2:183–88. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . "Long-term Nile Flood Variation and Political Discontinuities in Pharaonic Egypt." In *From Hunters to Farmers: Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa*, edited by J. D. Clark and S. A. Brandt, 102–12. Berkley: University of California Press, 1984.
- . "Nile." In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford, 2: 543–51. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Cai Wanjin 蔡萬進. *Yinwan Han mu jian du lunkao* 尹灣漢墓簡牘論考. Taipei: Taiwan Guji Chubun Youxian Gongsi, 2002.
- Cao Lüning 曹旅寧. "Liye Qin jian 'Ci lü' kaoshu" 里耶秦簡《祠律》考述. *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 8 (2008): 37–42.
- Capart, J., A. H. Gardiner, and B. van de Walle. "New Light on the Ramesside Tomb-Robberies." *JEA* 22, no. 2 (1936): 169–93.
- Carnarvon, George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, Howard Carter, F. Ll Griffith, Georges Albert Legrain, Georg Möller, Percy E. Newberry, and Wilhelm Spiegelberg. *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes; A Record of Work Done 1907–1911*. London: H. Frowde, 1912.
- Carneiro, Robert L. "A Theory of the Origin of the State." *Science* 21 (August 1970): 733–38.
- Carter, Howard, Douglas Derry, and Harry Burton. *The Tomb of Tut.Ankh.Amen Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*. London: Duckworth, 2000.
- Černý, Jaroslav. *Ancient Egyptian Religion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- . *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh*. Cairo: IFAO, 1939.
- . *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*. Cairo: IFAO, 1973.
- . "Egyptian Oracles." In *A Saite Oracle Papyrus from Thebes in the Brooklyn Museum [Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.3]*, edited by Richard A. Parker, 35–48. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1962.
- . "Le culte d'Amenophis I chez les ouvriers de la Nécropole thébaine [avec 9 planches]." *BIFAO* 27 (1927): 159–203.
- . *Paper & Books in Ancient Egypt: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University College, London, 29 May, 1947*. London: H. K. Lewis, 1952.
- . *Papyrus Hiératiques de Deir El-Medineh, Nos. Xviii–Xxxiv*. Cairo: IFAO, 1986.
- . "Papyrus Salt 124 (Brit. Mus. 10055)." *JEA* 15 (1929): 243–58.
- . "The Will of Naunakhte and the Related Documents." *JEA* 31 (1945): 29–53.
- Černý, Jaroslav, and Alan H. Gardiner. *Hieratic Ostraca*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957.
- Černý, Jaroslav, and S. I. Groll. *A Late Egyptian Grammar*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975.
- Černý, Jaroslav, and G. Posener. *Papyrus Hiératiques de Deir El-Médineh, Nos. I–Xvii*. Cairo: IFAO, 1978.

- Chang, Chun-shu. *The Rise of the Chinese Empire*. 2 vols. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007.
- Chang, K. C. *Shang Civilization*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Chang Qu 常璩. *Huayang guozhi jiaobu tuzhu* 華陽國志校補圖注, edited by Ren Naiqiang 任乃強. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1987.
- Chen Kanli 陳侃理. "Shuihui di Qin jian Biannian ji zhong 'Xi' de huanli" 睡虎地秦簡《編年記》中「喜」的宦歷. *Guoxue xuekan* 4 (2015): 47–50.
- Chen Wei 陳偉, ed. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi (diyi juan)* 里耶秦簡牘校釋(第一卷). Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue Chubanshe, 2012.
- _____. *Qin jian du heji* 秦簡牘合集. Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue Chubanshe, 2014.
- Chin, Tamara. "Defamiliarizing the Foreigner: Sima Qian's Ethnography and Han-Xiongnu Marriage Diplomacy." *HJAS* 70, no. 2 (2010): 311–54.
- _____. *Savage Exchange: Han Imperialism, Chinese Literary Style, and the Economic Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.
- Chongqing Wushan Xian Wenwu Guanlisuo 重慶巫山縣文物管理所 and Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Sanxia Gongzuodui 中國社會科學院考古研究所三峽工作隊, eds. "Chongqing Wushan xian Dong-Han liujin tongpaishi de faxian yu yanjiu" 重慶巫山縣東漢塗金銅牌飾的發現與研究. *Kaogu* (1998.12): 77–86.
- Clayton, Peter A. *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2006.
- Cohen, Raymond, and Raymond Westbrook, eds. *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Conrad, Geoffrey W., and Arthur Andrew Demarest. *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Cullen, H. M., P. B. deMenocal, S. Hemming, G. Hemming, F. H. Brown, T. Guilderson, and F. Sirocko. "Climate Change and the Collapse of the Akkadian Empire: Evidence from the Deep Sea." *Geology* 28, no. 4 (April 2000): 379–82.
- D'Auria, Sue, Peter Lacovara, and Catharine H. Roehrig. *Mummies and Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 1989.
- Davies, Benedict G. *Who's Who at Deir El-Medina: A Prosopographic Study of the Royal Workmen's Community*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1999.
- Davies, Norman de Garis. *The Rock Tombs of el-Amarna*. 6 vols. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1903–8.
- _____. *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1941.
- Dee, Michael, et al. "An Absolute Chronology for Early Egypt Using Radiocarbon Dating and Bayesian Statistical Modelling." *Proceedings: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 469, no. 2159 (2013): 1–10.
- DeLong, Alton J. "Phenomenological Space-Time: Towards an Experiential Relativity." *Science* 213 (1981): 681–83.
- Demarée, R. J., and Jac J. Janssen. *Gleanings from Deir el-Medîna*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1982.
- Desroches-Noblecourt, Christiane. *Tutankhamen: Life and Death of a Pharaoh*. New York: New York Graphic Society, 1963.
- Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, translated by C. H. Oldfather. 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.
- Dodson, Aidan. *Afterglow of Empire: Egypt from the Fall of the New Kingdom to the Saite Renaissance*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012.
- _____. *Amarna Sunset: Nefertiti, Tutankhamun, Ay, Horemheb, and the Egyptian Counter-Reformation*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010.
- _____. *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2004.
- _____. "The Co-Regency Conundrum." *Kmt* 34 (2014): 28–35.
- _____. *Monarchs of the Nile: New Revised Edition*. New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2016.
- Donati, Angela, and Palazzo del Podestà. *Romana pictura: La pittura romana dalle origini all'età bizantina*. Milan: Electa, 1998.
- Donker van Heel, Koen. *Mrs. Naunakhte & Family: The Women of Ramesside Deir al-Medina*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2016.

- Donker van Heel, Koen, and B. J. J. Haring. *Writing in a Workmen's Village: Scribal Practice in Ramesside Deir El-Medina*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2003.
- Dorn, Andreas. *Arbeiterhütten im Tal der Könige: Ein Beitrag zur altägyptischen Sozialgeschichte aufgrund von neuem Quellenmaterial aus der Mitte der 20. Dynastie (ca. 1150 v. Chr.)*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2011.
- Dubs, Homer H. "An Ancient Chinese Mystery Cult." *Harvard Theological Review* 35, no. 4 (1942): 221–40.
- . "An Ancient Chinese Stock of Gold." *Journal of Economic History* 2, no. 1 (1942): 36–39.
- . *History of the Former Han Dynasty by Pan Ku*. 3 vols. Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938–1955.
- . "Wang Mang and His Economic Reforms." *T'oung Pao*, 2nd ser., 35, no. 4 (1940): 219–65.
- Durrant, Stephen W., Wai-ye Li, Michael Nylan, and Hans van Ess. *The Letter to Ren An and Sima Qian's Legacy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016.
- Durrant, Stephan W., Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans. *Zuo Tradition 左傳 Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016.
- Edwards, E. S. "Khenhikhshef's Prophylactic Charm." *JEA* 54 (1968): 155–60.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. *The Political Systems of Empires*. New York: The Free Press, 1963.
- Emery, W. B. *Excavations at Saqqara: Great Tombs of the First Dynasty*. 3 vols. Cairo and London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1949–1958.
- . "Preliminary Report on the Excavations of North Saqqara: 1964–5." *JEA* 51 (December 1965): 3–8.
- Enmarch, Roland. *A World Upturned: Commentary on and Analysis of The Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Eschenbrenner-Diemer, Gersande. "From the Workshop to the Grave: The Case of Wooden Funerary Models." In *Company of Images: Modelling the Imaginary World of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000–1550 BCE)*, edited by G. Miniaci, M. Bettrò, and S. Quirke, 133–91. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Eyre, C. J. "Crime and Adultery in Ancient Egypt." *JEA* 70 (1984): 92–105.
- Falkenhansen, Lothar von. "Ahnenkult und Grabkult im Staat Qin: Der religiöse Hintergrund der Terrakotta-Armee." In *Jenseits der großen Mauer: Der erste Kaiser von Qin und seine Terrakotta-Armee*, edited by Lothar Ledderose and Adele Schlombs, 35–48. Munich: Bertelsmann, 1990.
- . "Antiquarianism in East Asia: A Preliminary Overview." In *World Antiquarianism*, edited by Alain Schnapp et al., 35–66. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Press, 2013.
- . "Inconsequential Incomprehensions: Some Instances of Chinese Writing in Alien Contexts." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 35 (1999): 42–69.
- Fang Xuanling 房玄齡. *Jin shu* 晉書. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974.
- Faulkner, Raymond O. *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 3 vols. Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1973–1978.
- . *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962.
- Feldman, Marian H. *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Feng Yunpeng 馮雲鵬 and Feng Yunyuan 馮雲鵠. *Jinshisuo* 金石索. Shanghai: Jishan Shuju, 1893.
- Fisher, Majorie M., Peter Lacovara, Salima Ikram, and Sue D'Auria, eds. *Ancient Nubia: African Kingdoms on the Nile*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012.
- Flannery, Kent V. "The Cultural Evolution of Civilizations." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 3 (1972): 399–426.
- Forke, Alfred. *Lun-heng: Philosophical Essays of Wang Ch'ung*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1907.
- Foster, John L. "Thought Couplets in Khety's 'Hymn to the Inundation.'" *JNEA* 34, no. 1 (1975): 1–29.
- Foxhall, Lin. "Introduction: Miniaturization." *World Archaeology* 47 (2015): 1–5.
- Frankfort, Henri. *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

- Freed, Rita E. "Art in the Service of Religion and the State." In *Pharaohs of the Sun*, edited by Rita E. Freed, Sue D'Auria, and Yvonne Markowitz, 110–29. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1999.
- Freed, Rita E., Lawrence M. Berman, Denise M. Doxey, and Nicholas S. Picardo. *The Secrets of Tomb 10A: Egypt 2000 BC*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009.
- Freed, Rita E., Sue D'Auria, and Yvonne J. Markowitz. *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1999.
- Fu Juyou 傅舉有. "Lun Qin Han shiqi de boju, boxi jianji boju wenjing" 論秦漢時期的博具、博戲兼及博局紋鏡. In *Hunan Sheng Bowuguan sishi zhounian jinian lunwenji* 湖南省博物館四十週年紀念論文集, edited by Hunan Sheng Bowuguan, 17–43. Changsha: Hunan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1996.
- _____. ed. *Mawangdui Han mu wenwu* 馬王堆漢墓文物. Changsha: Hunan Chubanshe, 1992.
- Gansu Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 甘肅省文物考古研究所, ed. *Dunhuang Han jian* 敦煌漢簡. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1991.
- Gardiner, Alan H. *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, 3rd Series: Chester Beatty Gift*. London, 1935.
- _____. *Late Egyptian Stories*. Brussels, 1932.
- _____. "A Later Allusion to Akhenaten." *JEA* 24, no. 1 (1938): 124.
- Garnsey, P. D. A., and C. R. Whittaker, eds. *Imperialism in the Ancient World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Garstang, John. *The Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt, As Illustrated by Tombs of the Middle Kingdom, Being A Report of Excavations made in the Necropolis of Beni Hassan during 1902–3–4*. London: Archibald Constable, 1907.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Giele, Enno. "Private Letter Manuscripts from Early Imperial China." In *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, edited by Antje Richter, 403–74. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Gizewski, Christian, and Alexander Mlasowsky. "Damnatio memoriae." In *Brill's New Pauly*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e310400. First published online: 2006.
- Goedicke, Hans. "The Canaanite Illness." *SAK* 11 (1984): 92.
- _____. *The Report of Wenamun*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- Goldstone, Jack A. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Graham, A., and J. Bunbury. "The Ancient Landscapes and Waterscapes of Karnak." *Egyptian Archaeology* 27 (2005): 17–19.
- Grandet, Pierre. *Le Papyrus Harris I, BM 9999*. 3 vols. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1994.
- Greiff, Susanne, and Yin Shenping. *Das Grab des Bin Wang: Wandmalereien der Östlichen Han Zeit in China*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.
- Griffith, Drew. "Sailing to Elysium: Menelaus' Afterlife ('Odyssey' 4.561–569) and Egyptian Religion." *Phoenix* 55, nos. 3/4 (2001): 213–43.
- Guo, Jue. "Western Han Funerary Relocation Documents and the Making of the Dead in Early Imperial China." *Bamboo and Silk* 2 (2019): 141–272.
- Guo, Qinghua. *The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China (206 BC–AD 220)*. Sussex: Academic Press, 2010.
- Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, eds. *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集. 13 vols. Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju, 1978–1982.
- Hagen, Fredrik. *An Ancient Egyptian Literary Text in Context: The Instructions of Ptahhotep*. Leuven: Peeters; Department of Oriental Studies, 2012.
- Hall, David L., and Roger T. Ames. *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.
- _____. *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, And Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998.
- _____. *Thinking through Confucius*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1987.
- Han Yangling Bowuguan 漢陽陵博物館, ed. *Han Yangling Bowuguan* 漢陽陵博物館. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2007.
- Haring, Ben. "From Oral Practice to Written Record in Ramesside Deir El-Medina." *JESHO*

- Harper, Donald. "Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts Related to Natural Philosophy and the Occult." In *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, edited by Edward L. Shaughnessy, 223–52. Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 1997.
- Harris, W. V. *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome: 327–70 BC*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- Hassan, Fekri A. "The Fall of the Egyptian Old Kingdom," www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/apocalypse_egypt_01.shtml.
- _____. "A River Runs through Egypt: Nile Floods and Civilization." *Geo Times* (April 2005) www.geotimes.org/apr05/feature_NileFloods.html.
- Hassan, Fekri A., Mohamed Hamdan, R. J. Flower, and Geoffrey Tassie. "Holocene Geoarchaeology and Water History of the Fayoum, Egypt." www.researchgate.net/publication/268075172_holocene_geoarchaeology_and_water_history_ofthe_fayoum_egypt.
- Hassan, Fekri A., and Geoffrey Tassie. "Modelling Environmental and Settlement Changes in the Fayum." *Egyptian Archaeology* 29 (2006): 37–40.
- Hawass, Zahi. *King Tutankhamun: The Treasures of the Tomb*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2007.
- Hawkes, David, trans. *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Hays, Harold M. "The Death of the Democratisation of the Afterlife." In *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750–2150 BCE*, edited by Nigel Strudwick and Helen Strudwick, 115–30. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011.
- _____. "Transformation of Context: The Field of Rushes in Old and Middle Kingdom Mortuary Literature." In *D'un monde à l'autre. Textes des Pyramides & Textes des Sarcophages*, edited by S. Bickel and B. Mathieu, 175–200. Cairo: Bibliothèque d'Étude, 2004.
- Helck, Wolfgang. *Die Lehre des Dw3-Htj*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970.
- _____. *Der Text des "Nilhymnus"*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972.
- _____. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie—Text des Heftes 17–22*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955–1958.
- Helck, Wolfgang, and Eberhard Otto. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. 7 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–1992.
- Henan Bowuyuan 河南博物院, ed. *Henan chutu Handai jianzhu mingqi* 河南出土漢代建築明器. Zhengzhou: Daxiang Chubanshe, 2002.
- Henan Sheng Bowuguan 河南省博物館, ed. "Lingbao Zhangwan Han mu" 靈寶張灣漢墓. *Wenwu* (1975.11): 75–93.
- Hillier, J., J. Bunbury, and A. Graham. "Monuments on a Migrating Nile." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 34 (2007): 1011–15.
- Hinsch, Bret. "Women, Kinship, and Property as Seen in a Han Dynasty Will." *T'oung Pao*, 2nd ser., 84, fasc. 1/3 (1998): 1–20.
- Ho, Ping-ti. "The Loess and the Origins of Chinese Agriculture." *AHR* 75, no. 1 (October 1969): 1–36.
- Hoch, James E. "The Teaching of Dua-Kheti: A New Look at the Satire of the Trades." *JSSEA* 21–22 (1991–1992, published 1994): 88–100.
- Hodel-Hoernes, Sigrid. *Life and Death in Ancient Egypt: Scenes from Private Tombs in New Kingdom Thebes*. Translated by David Warburton. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Holmes, Y. Lynn. "The Messengers of the Amarna Letters." *JAOS* 95, no. 3 (1975): 376–81.
- Holmgren, Jennifer. "Imperial Marriage in the Native Chinese and Non-Han State, Han to Ming." In *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, 59–97. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Hornung, Erik. *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*. Translated by David Lorton. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Hsing, I-tien (Xing Yitian) 邢義田. "Muquan, waiqi, rusheng: Wang Mang cuan Han de jidian jieshi" 母權、外戚、儒生——王莽篡漢的幾點解釋. *Lishi yuekan* (1989.14): 36–44.
- _____. "Rome and China: The Role of the Armies in the Imperial Succession: A Comparative Study." PhD diss, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1980.
- Hsü, C. V. "The Queen Mother of the West: Historical or Legendary?" *Asian Culture Quarterly*

- Hu, Shih. “Wang Mang, the Socialist Emperor of Nineteen Centuries Ago.” *JNCBRAS* 59 (1928): 218–30.
- Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 and Zhang Defang 張德芳. *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shicui* 敦煌懸泉漢簡釋粹. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2001.
- Huaiyang Xian Bowuguan 淮陽縣博物館. “Huaiyang chutu Xi-Han sanjin tao yuanluo” 淮陽出土西漢三進陶院落. *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1987.4): 69–73.
- Huan Kuan 桓寬. *Yantielun jiaozhu* 鹽鐵論校注. Edited and annotated by Wang Liqi 王利器. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1992.
- Huang Minglan 黃明蘭 and Guo Yingqiang 郭引強. *Luoyang Han mu bihua* 洛陽漢墓壁畫. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1996.
- Huang Ruxuan 黃儒宣. “Liubo qiju de yanbian” 六博棋局的演變. *Zhongyuan wenwu* (2010.1): 52–60.
- Huazhong Shifan Xueyuan 華中師範學院 and Zhong Zhicheng 鍾志成. “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu chutu yitao wenshu gongju” 江陵鳳凰山一六八號漢墓出土一套文書工具. *Wenwu* (1975.9): 20–22.
- Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 湖北省考古文物研究所. *Jiangling Fenghuangshan Xi-Han jiandu* 江陵鳳凰山西漢簡牘. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2013.
- . “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu” 江陵鳳凰山一六八號漢墓. *Kaogu xuebao* (1993.4): 455–513.
- Hulsewé, A. F. P. *Remnants of Ch'in Law: An Annotated Translation of the Ch'in Legal and Administrative Rules of the 3rd Century B.C. Discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province, in 1975*. Leiden: Brill, 1985.
- Hulsewé, A. F. P., and Michael Loewe. *China in Central Asia: The Early Stage, 125 B.C.–A.D. 23: An Annotated Translation of Chapters 61 and 96 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty*. Leiden: Brill, 1979.
- Hunan Sheng Bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Zhongguo Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 中國科學院考古研究所, eds. *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu* 長沙馬王堆一號漢墓. 2 vols. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1973.
- Hunter, Michael. *Confucius beyond the Analects*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- James, T. G. H. *The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1962.
- . *Pharaoh's People: Scenes from Life in Imperial Egypt*. London: Bodley Head, 1984.
- Janssen, Jac. J. “Absence from Work by the Necropolis Workmen of Thebes.” *SAK* 8 (1980): 127–52.
- . “Two Personalities.” In *Gleanings from Deir el-Medīna*, edited by R. J. Demarée and Jac J. Janssen, 109–23. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1982.
- Jaritz, Horst. “Nilmesser.” In *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, edited by Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, 4:496–97. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–1992.
- Jeffreys, David. “The Nile Valley.” In *The Egyptian World*, edited by Toby Wilkinson, 7–14. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- . *Survey of Memphis: Part I, The Archaeological Report*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1985.
- Jiangxi Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 江西省文物考古研究所, ed. *Wuse xuanyao: Nanchang Han dai Haihun houguo kaogu chengguo* 五色炫曜——南昌漢代海昏侯國考古成果. Nanchang: Jiangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2016.
- Jiao Nanfeng 焦南峰. “Han Yangling cong zangkeng chutan” 漢陽陵從葬坑初探. *Wenwu* (2006.7): 51–57.
- Jinan Cheng Fenghuangshan Yiliuba Hao Han Mu Fajue Zhenglizu 紀南城鳳凰山一六八號漢墓發掘整理組, ed. “Hubei Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu fajue jianbao” 湖北江陵鳳凰山一六八號漢墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (1975.9): 1–8, 22.
- Jinan Shi Bowuguan 濟南市博物館, ed. “Shitan Jinan Wuyingshan chutu de Xi-Han yuewu, zaji, yanyin taoyong” 試談濟南無影山出土的西漢樂舞、雜技、宴飲陶俑. *Wenwu* (1972.5): 19–23.
- Junge, Friedrich. *Late Egyptian Grammar: An Introduction*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2005.
- Kampp-Seyfried, Friederike. *In the Light of Amarna: 100 Years of the Nefertiti Discovery*. Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2012.

- Kampp-Seyfried, Friederike, and Mariana Jung. *China und Ägypten: Wiegen Der Welt*. Munich: Prestel, 2017.
- Keightley, David N. *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China*. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000.
- _____. "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture." *History of Religions* 17, nos. 3/4 (1978): 211–25.
- Kemp, Barry J. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- _____. *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and Its People*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2014.
- _____. "Imperialism and Empire in New Kingdom Egypt." In *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, edited by P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, 7–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- _____. "The Window of Appearance at El-Amarna, and the Basic Structure of This City." *JEA* 62, no. 1 (1976): 81–99.
- Kendall, Timothy. "Games." In *Egypt's Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom 1558–1085 B.C.*, edited by Rita E. Freed, 263–65. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1982.
- _____. *Passing through the Netherworld: The Meaning and Play of Senet, an Ancient Egyptian Game*. Boston: Whitehall Educational Toys, 1978.
- Kidder, Tristram. "Sanyangzhuang: Life and Death in the Yellow River Floodplain." In *China: Visions through the Ages*, edited by Lisa C. Niziolek, Deborah A. Bekken, and Gary M. Feinman, 109–15. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Kidder, Tristram, Haiwang Liu, and Minglin Li. "Sanyangzhuang: Early Farming and a Han Settlement Preserved beneath Yellow River Flood Deposits." *Antiquity* 86, no. 331 (2012): 30–47.
- Kidder, Tristram, Haiwang Liu, Qinghai Xu, and Minglin Li. "The Alluvial Geoarchaeology of the Sanyangzhuang Site on the Yellow River Floodplain, Henan Province, China." *Geoarchaeology* 27 (2012): 324–43.
- Kilani, Marwan. *Byblos in the Late Bronze Age: Interactions between the Levantine and Egyptian Worlds*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Kim, Hyun Jin. *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China*. London: Duckworth, 2009.
- Kitchen, Kenneth A. *Rameside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*. 8 vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 1969–1990.
- _____. *Rameside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated: Translations*. 7 vols. Oxford: Blackwell; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993–2014.
- _____. *Rameside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Notes and Commentaries I*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- _____. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, 1100–650 B.C.* Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986.
- Kitchen, Kenneth A., and Benedict G. Davies. *Rameside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated: Notes and Comments*. 4 vols. Oxford: Blackwell; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993–2014.
- Knauer, Elfriede R. "A Study of the Influence of Western Prototypes on the Iconography of the Taoist Deity." In *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World*, edited by Victor H. Mair, 62–115. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.
- Ko, Dorothy. *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.
- Korolkov, Maxim. "'Greeting Tablets' in Early China: Some Traits of the Communicative Etiquette of Officialdom in Light of Newly Excavated Inscriptions." *T'oung Pao* 98, nos. 4–5 (2012): 295–348.
- Kozloff, Arielle. *Amenhotep III: Egypt's Radiant Pharaoh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Kozloff, Arielle, Betsy M. Bryan, and Lawrence M. Berman. *Egypt's Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep III and His World*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.
- Kruchten, Jean-Marie. *Le décret d'Horemheb*. Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1981.
- Lai, Guolong. "Death and the Otherworldly Journey in Early China as Seen through Tomb Texts, Travel Paraphernalia, and Road Rituals." *Asia Major* 18, no. 1 (2005): 1–44.

- _____. *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015.
- _____. "Lighting the Way in the Afterlife: Bronze Lamps in Warring States Tombs." *Orientalia* 33, no. 4 (2002): 20–28.
- Lai, Whalen. "Looking for Mr. Ho Po: Unmasking the River God of Ancient China." *History of Religions* 29, no. 4 (May, 1990): 335–50.
- Lau, Ulrich. "The Scope of Private Jurisdiction in Early Imperial China: The Evidence of Newly Excavated Legal Documents." *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 59, no. 1 (2005): 333–52.
- Ledderose, Lothar. *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Lehner, Mark. "The Fractal House of Pharaoh: Ancient Egypt as a Complex Adaptive System: A Trial Formulation." In *Dynamics of Human and Primate Societies: Agent-Based Modeling of Social and Spatial Processes*, edited by Timothy A. Kohler and George J. Gumerman, 275–353. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Lesko, Leonard H. "The Field of Hetep in Egyptian Coffin Texts." *JARCE* 9 (1971): 89–101.
- _____. "Literature, Literacy, and Literati." In *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir El Medina*, edited by Leonard H. Lesko, 131–44. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Levine, Philippa. "Is Comparative History Possible?" *History and Theory* 53 (2014): 331–47.
- Lewis, Mark Edward. *The Flood Myths of Early China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2006.
- _____. *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.
- Li Daoyuan 酈道元. *Shuijing zhu jiao* 水經注校, edited by Wang Guowei 王國維. Shanghai: Renmin Chubanshe, 1984.
- Li Fang 李昉 et al. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1963.
- Li Jiemin 李解民. "Yangzhou Yizheng xupu jianshu xinkao" 揚州儀征胥浦簡書新考. In *Changsha Sanguo Wu jian ji bainian lai jianbo faxian yu yanjiu guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 長沙三國吳簡暨百年來簡帛發現與研究國際學術研討會論文集, edited by Changsha Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 長沙市文物考古研究所 and Li Xueqin 李學勤, 449–57. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2005.
- Li Yuejun 李曰訓. "Shandong Zhangqiu nulangshan Zhanguo mu chutu yuewu taoyong ji youguan wenti" 山東章丘女郎山戰國墓出土樂舞陶俑及有關問題. *Wenwu* (1993.3): 1–7.
- Liang Siyong 梁思永 and Gao Quxun 高去尋. *Houjiazhuang: Henan Anyang Houjiazhuang Yin dai mudi: di er ben, 1001 hao da mu* 侯家莊：河南安陽侯家莊殷代墓地：第2本1001號大墓. Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1962.
- Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan 連雲港市博物館, Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Yuan Jianbo Yanjiu Zhongxin 中國社會科學院簡帛研究中心, Donghai Xian Bowuguan 東海縣博物館, and Zhongguo Wenwu Yanjiusuo 中國文物研究所, eds. *Yinwan Han mu jiandu* 尹灣漢墓簡牘. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1997.
- Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan 連雲港市博物館 and Zhongguo Wenwu Yanjiusuo 中國文物研究所. *Yinwan Han mu jiandu zonglun* 尹灣漢墓簡牘總論. Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1999.
- Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973–1980.
- _____. "Three Philological Notes." In *Studies in Honor of John A. Wilson*, edited by E. B. Hauser, 63–68. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1969.
- Lilyquist, Christine. *The Tomb of Three Foreign Wives of Tuthmosis III*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003.
- _____. "Treasures from Tell Basta: Goddesses, Officials, and Artists in an International Age." *MMJ* 47 (2012): 9–72.
- Liu Hongshi 劉洪石. "Ye, ci kaoshu" 謁刺考述. In *Yinwan Han mu jiandu zonglun*, edited by Lianyungang Shi Bowuguan and Zhongguo Wenwu Yanjiusuo, 139–43. Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1999.
- Liverani, Mario. "The Great Powers Club." In *Amarna Diplomacy*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 15–27. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- _____. *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 B.C.* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001.
- _____. *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600–1100 B.C.* Padova: Sargon, 1990.

- Lloyd, Geoffrey E. R. *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into Ancient Greek and Chinese Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- _____. *The Ambitions of Curiosity: Understanding the World in Ancient Greece and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- _____. *Demystifying Mentalities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- _____. "Introduction: Methods, Problems, and Prospects." In *Ancient Greece and China Compared*, edited by Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd and Jingyi Jenny Zhao, 1–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Lloyd, Geoffrey E. R., and Nathan Sivin. *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early Greece and China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Lloyd, Geoffrey E. R., and Jingyi Jenny Zhao, eds. *Ancient Greece and China Compared*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Loewe, Michael. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods, 221 BC–AD 24*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- _____. *Dong Zhongshu: A "Confucian" Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- _____. *The Men Who Governed Han China: Companion to A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- _____. "The Organs of Han Imperial Government: *Zhongdu guan*, *duguan*, *xianguan* and *xiandao guan*." *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no. 3 (2008): 509–28.
- _____. "Wang Mang and His Forebears: The Making of the Myth." *T'oung Pao* 80 no. 4/5 (1994): 197–222.
- _____. *Ways to Paradise: The Chinese Quest for Immortality*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979.
- _____. "Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents of the Han Period." In *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, edited by Edward L. Shaughnessy, 161–92. Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 1997.
- Loewe, Michael, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, eds. *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Loprieno, Antonio. *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Lullo, Sheri A. "Toiletry Case Sets Across Life and Death in Early China (5th c. BCE–3rd c. CE)." PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2010.
- Ma, Tsang Wing (Ben Ma). "Scribes, Assistants, and the Materiality of Administrative Documents in Qin-Early Han China: Excavated Evidence from Liye, Shuihudi, and Zhangjiaoshan." *T'oung Pao* 103, no. 4–5 (November 2017): 297–333.
- Ma Yi 馬怡. "Jiandu shidai de shuxie: Yi shijue ziliao wei zhongxin de kaocha" 簡牘時代的書寫——以視覺資料為中心的考察. *Jianbo wangzhan*, March 7, 2014. www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1995.
- _____. "Zhongguo gudai shuxie fangshi tanyuan" 中國古代書寫方式探源. *Wenshi* (2013.3): 147–189.
- MacKenzie, Colin. "Liubo: The Five-Hundred-Year Craze." In *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, edited by Colin MacKenzie and Irving Finkel, 112–25. New York: Asia Society, 2004.
- Major, John S. *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993.
- Major, John S., Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, trans. *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Mallinson, Michael. "The Sacred Landscape." In *Pharaohs of the Sun*, edited by Rita E. Freed, Sue D'Auria, and Yvonne Markowitz, 72–80. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1999.
- Martin, G. T. *The Royal Tomb of El-Amarna I: The Objects*. London: EES, 1974.
- Mattha, Gergis, and George R. Hughes. *The Demotic Legal Code of Hermopolis West*. Cairo: IFAO, 1975.
- McDowell, Andrea. "Awareness of the Past in Deir el Medina." In *Village Voices: Proceedings of the Symposium "Texts from Deir el-Medina and their Interpretation": Leiden, May 31–June 1, 1991*, edited by R. J. Demarée and A. Egberts, 95–109. Leiden: Centre of Non-Western Studies, Leiden University, 1992.
- _____. *Jurisdiction in the Workmen's Community of Deir El-Medina*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut

- voor het Nabije Oosten, 1990.
- . “Teachers and Students at Deir el-Medina.” In *Deir el-Medina in the Third Millennium AD: A Tribute to Jac. J. Janssen*, edited by Jac J. Janssen, R. J. Demarée, and A. Egberts, 217–33. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2000.
- . *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Meier, Samuel. “Diplomacy and International Marriages.” In *Amarna Diplomacy*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 165–73. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Miller, Allison. *Kingly Splendor: Court Art and Materiality in Han China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Moeller, Nadine. “The First Intermediate Period: A Time of Famine and Climate Change?” *Ägypten und Levante* 15 (2005): 153–67.
- Montet, Pierre. *Byblos et L’Égypte: Quatre Campagnes de Fouilles à Gebeil, 1921–1922–1923–1924*. 2 vols. Paris, 1928.
- Montserrat, Dominic. *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy, and Ancient Egypt*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Moran, William. *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992.
- Moreno Garcia, Juan Carlos, and Yuri Pines. “Building World Orders in Ancient China and Egypt: Tianxia and Maat.” *Journal of Egyptian History* 13 (forthcoming).
- Morenz, Ludwig D. *Beiträge Zur Schriftlichkeitskultur Im Mittleren Reich Und in Der 2. Zwischenzeit*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.
- Morris, Ellen. *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018.
- Muhs, Brian. *The Ancient Egyptian Economy 3000–30 BCE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Murnane, William J. *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Murnane, William J., and Charles Cornell Van Siclen. *The Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1993.
- Muscolino, Micah S. *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond, 1938–1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Mutschler, Fritz-Heiner, and Achim Mittag. *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Mynářová, Jana. “Discovery, Research, and Excavation of the Amarna Tablets: The Formative Stage.” In *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna Based on Collations of All Extant Tablets*, edited by Anson F. Rainey 37–46. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Na’aman, Nadav. “The Egyptian-Canaanite Correspondence.” In *Amarna Diplomacy*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 125–40. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Needham, Joseph. *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.
- Needham, Joseph, et al. *Science and Civilisation in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–.
- Nickel, Lukas. “Brick-Built Heavens: Cosmic Symbolism in Mortuary Architecture and Painting at the Time of Wang Mang (9–23 CE).” In *Shifting Paradigms in East Asian Visual Culture: A Festschrift in Honour of Lothar Ledderose*, edited by Burglind Jungmann et al., 9–24. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2012.
- . “The First Emperor and Sculpture in China.” *Bulletin of SOAS* 76, no. 3 (2013): 413–47.
- Niwiński, Andrzej. “Plateaux d’offrandes et maisons d’âmes Genèse, évolution et fonction dans le culte des morts au temps de la XXIIe dynastie.” *Études et travaux* 8 (1974): 74–112.
- Nylan, Michael, and Griet Vankeerberghen, eds. *Chang’an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015.
- Nyord, Rune. “What Can an Image Do? Rethinking Wooden Funerary Models.” In *Modeling Ancient Egypt*, edited by Susanne Deicher. Berlin: Kadmos (forthcoming).
- O’Connor, David. *Abydos: Egypt’s First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris*. London: Thames and

- Hudson, 2009.
- Oller, Gary H. "Messengers and Ambassadors in Ancient Western Asia." In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jack M. Sasson 3:1465–71. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995.
- Oppenheim, Adela, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto. *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.
- Pan, Yihong. "Marriage Alliances and Chinese Princesses in International Politics from Han through Tang." *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 10 (1997): 95–131.
- Parkinson, Richard. *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side of Perfection*. London: Equinox, 2010.
- Parkinson, Richard, and Stephen Quirke. *Papyrus*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Peden, A. J. *Egyptian Historical Inscriptions of the Twentieth Dynasty*. Jonsered, Sweden: Paul Åströms, 1994.
- Peet, T. Eric. *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty. Being a Critical Study, with Translations and Commentaries, of the Papyri in Which These Are Recorded. I*. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1930.
- _____. *The Mayer Papyri A and B, Nos. M 11162 and M. 11186 of the Free Public Museums*. London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1920.
- Pendlebury, J. D. S., et al. *The City of Akhenaten, Part III: The Central City and the Official Quarters*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1951.
- Pestman, P. W. *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt: A Contribution to Establishing the Legal Position of the Woman*. Leiden: Brill, 1961.
- _____. "Who Were the Owners in the Community of Workmen of the Chester Beatty Papyri?" In *Gleanings from Deir El-Medina*, edited by R. J. Demarée and Jac J. Janssen, 155–72. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2000.
- Petrie, W. M. Flinders. *Prehistoric Egypt: Illustrated by Over 1,000 Objects in University College, London*. London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1920.
- Petrie, W. M. Flinders, and Guy Brunton. *Sedment I*. London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1924.
- Piankoff, Alexandre. *The Wandering of the Soul*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Piccione, Peter. "The Egyptian Game of *senet* and the Migration of the Soul." In *Ancient Board Games in Perspective*, edited by Irving Finkel, 54–63. London: British Museum Press, 2007.
- _____. "The Historical Development of the Game of *senet* and Its Significance for Egyptian Religion." PhD diss., University of Chicago, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1990.
- _____. "In Search of the Meaning of *Senet*." *Archaeology* 33 (July–August 1980): 55–58.
- Pietz, David Allen. *The Yellow River: The Problem of Water in Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Pillsbury, Joanne, Patricia Joan Sarro, James A. Doyle, and Juliet B. Wiersema. *Design for Eternity: Architectural Models from the Ancient Americas*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.
- Pinareello, Massimiliano S. *An Archaeological Discussion of Writing Practice: Deconstruction of the Ancient Egyptian Scribe*. London: Golden House, 2015.
- Pines, Yuri. "Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-Imperial Discourse." *Oriens Extremus* 43, nos. 1–2 (2002): 101–16.
- Poo, Mu-chou. *Enemies of Civilization: Attitudes toward Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005.
- _____. *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998.
- Portat, Jane. *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*. London: British Museum Press, 2007.
- Porter, Bertha, and Rosalind Moss. *The Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, VI Upper Egypt: Chief Temples (Excluding Thebes) Abydos, Dendera, Esna, Edfu, Kom Ombo, and Philae*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1991.
- Posener, Georges. "Découverte de l'ancienne Egypte." *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie* 112 (1988): 11–18.
- Puett, Michael. "Centering the Realm: Wang Mang, the Zhouli, and Early Chinese Statecraft."

- In *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, edited by Benjamin Elman and Martin Kern, 129–154. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Qu Wanli 屈萬里. “He zi yiyi de yanbian” 河字意義的演變. *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 30 (1959): 143–55.
- Quirke, Stephen. *Going Out in Daylight—prt m hrw, the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead, Translation, Sources, Meanings*. London: Golden House Publications, 2013.
- Ragazzoli, Chloé. *Scribes: Les artisans du texte en Égypte ancienne*. Paris: Belles Lettres, 2019.
- . “Weak Hands and Soft Mouths: Elements of a Scribal Identity in the New Kingdom.” *ZÄS* 130 (2010): 157–70.
- Raphals, Lisa. *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- . *Knowing Words: Wisdom and Cunning in the Classical Traditions of China and Greece*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Rappaport, Roy A. “The Sacred in Human Evolution.” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 2, no. 1 (1971): 23–44.
- Raschke, Manfred G. “New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East.” In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der Neueren Forschung II*, vol. 9.2:604–1361. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978.
- Rawson, Jessica. “The Power of Images: The Model Universe of the First Emperor and Its Legacy.” *Institute of Historical Research* 75, no. 188 (2002): 123–54.
- . “Thinking in Pictures: Tomb Figures in the Chinese View of the Afterlife.” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society* 61 (1996–1997): 19–37.
- Redford, Donald B. *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- . “Akhenaten: New Theories and Old Facts.” *BASOR* 369 (May 2013): 9–34.
- . “The Concept of Kingship.” In *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, edited by David O’Connor and David P. Silverman, 157–84. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- . *Egypt and Canaan in the New Kingdom*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1990.
- . *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- . “The Hyksos Invasion in History and Tradition.” *Orientalia* 39, no. 1 (1970): 44–51.
- , ed. *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals, and Day-Books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History*. Mississauga: Benben, 1986.
- . *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Reeves, Nicholas. *Akhenaten, Egypt’s False Prophet*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001.
- . *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, The Tomb, The Royal Treasure*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995.
- Riggs, Christina. *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Robins, Gay. *The Art of Ancient Egypt*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- . *Egyptian Painting and Relief*. Oxford: Shire Publications, 2008.
- . *Proportion and Style in Egyptian Art*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- . *Women in Ancient Egypt*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Robinson, Peter. “The Ritual Landscapes of the Field of Hetep.” *JSSEA* 34 (2007): 131–48.
- Roccati, Alessandro. “Scribes.” In *The Egyptians*, edited by S. Donadoni, 61–85. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Roehrig, Catharine H. “Life Along the Nile: Three Egyptians of Ancient Thebes.” *MMAB* 60, no. 1 (2002): 1–56.
- Römer, Cornelia. “The Nile in the Fayum: Strategies of Dominating and Using the Water Resources of the River in the Oasis in the Middle Kingdom and the Graeco-Roman Period.” In *The Nile: Natural and Cultural Landscape in Egypt*, edited by Harco Willems and Jan-Michael Dahms, 171–91. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017.
- Romer, John. *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharaohs*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984.
- Rosenstein, Nathan. “War, State Formation, and the Evolution of Military Institutions in Ancient China and Rome.” In *Rome and China*, edited by Walter Scheidel 24–51. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

- Roth, Ann Macy. "The Meaning of Menial Labor: 'Servant Statues' in Old Kingdom Serdabs." *JARCE* 39 (2002): 103–121.
- Roth, Martha T., and Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Ruitenbeek, Klaas. *Chinese Shadows: Stone Reliefs, Rubbings, and Related Works of Art from the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) in the Royal Ontario Museum*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 2002.
- Sage, Steven F. *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.
- Said, Rushdi. *The Geological Evolution of the River Nile*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1981.
- Sanft, Charles. *Communication and Cooperation in Early Imperial China: Publicizing the Qin Dynasty*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2014.
- Sasson, Jack M., ed. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. 4 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995.
- Scalf, Foy. *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2017.
- Scheidel, Walter. "Comparing Comparisons." In *Ancient Greece and China Compared*, edited by Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd and Jingyi Jenny Zhao, 40–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- _____. ed. *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- _____. *State Power in Ancient China and Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Schulman, Alan. "Diplomatic Marriages in the Egyptian New Kingdom." *JNEA* 38, no. 3 (July 1979): 177–93.
- Scott, Gerry D. "The History and Development of the Ancient Egyptian Scribe Statue." PhD diss., Yale University, 1989.
- Seidlmayer, Stephan Johannes. *Historische und moderne Nilstände: Untersuchungen zu den Pegelablesungen des Nils von der Frühzeit bis in die Gegenwart*. Berlin: Achet, 2001.
- Selbitschka, Armin. "The Early Silk Road(s)." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, online publication, March 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.2>.
- _____. "'I Write Therefore I Am': Scribes, Literacy, and Identity in Early China." *HJAS* 78, no. 2 (2018): 413–77.
- _____. "Miniature Tomb Figurines and Models in Pre-Imperial and Early Imperial China: Origins, Development and Significance." *World Archaeology* 47, no. 1 (2015): 20–44.
- _____. "Quotidian Afterlife: Grain, Granary Models, and the Notion of Continuing Nourishment in Late Pre-imperial and Early Imperial Tombs." In *Über den Alltag hinaus: Festschrift für Thomas O. Höllmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Shing Müller and Armin Selbitschka, 89–106. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017.
- _____. "A Tricky Game: A Re-Evaluation of Liubo 六博 Based on Archaeological and Textual Evidence." *Oriens Extremus* 55 (2016): 105–66.
- Sethe, Kurt. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1906.
- Shaanxi Kaogu Yanjiuyuan 陝西考古研究院, ed. "Han Yangling diling dongce 11–21 hao waicangkeng fajue jianbao." 漢陽陵帝陵東側11~21號外藏坑發掘簡報 *Kaogu yu wenwu* (2008.3): 3–32.
- Shandong Wenwu Shiye Guanliju 山東文物事業管理局, ed. *Shandong wenwu jingcui* 山東文物精萃. Jinan: Shandong Meishu Chubanshe, 1996.
- Shankman, Stephen, and Stephen W. Durrant. *Early China/Ancient Greece: Thinking through Comparisons*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.
- _____. *The Siren and The Sage: Knowledge and Wisdom in Ancient Greece and China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2000.
- Shaughnessy, Edward L. *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*. Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, 1997.
- Shi, Jie. *Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Ideology in Early China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian Zhengli Xiaozu 睡虎地秦墓竹簡整理小組, ed. *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1990.

- Sichuan Guanxian Wenjiaoju 四川省灌縣文教局. “Dujiangyan chutu Dong-Han Li Bing shixiang” 都江堰出土東漢李冰石像. *Wenwu* (1974.7): 27–28.
- Sima Qian 司馬遷. *Shi ji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985.
- Simpson, William Kelly, ed. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- . “The Vessels with Engraved Designs and the Repoussé Bowl from the Tell Basta Treasure.” *AJA* 63 (1959): 29–45.
- Sivin, Nathan. “Why Some Comparisons Make More Difference.” In *Ancient Greece and China Compared*, edited by Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd and Jingyi Jenny Zhao, 33–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Skocpol, Theda, and Margaret Somers. “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980): 174–197.
- Smith, Mark. *Following Osiris: Perspectives on the Osirian Afterlife from Four Millennia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Smith, Stuart Tyson. “Intact Tombs of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Dynasties from Thebes and the New Kingdom Burial System.” *MDAIK* 48 (1992): 193–231.
- . *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Snape, Stephen. *Ancient Egyptian Tombs: The Culture of Life and Death*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Stanley, J.-D., M. D. Krom, R. A. Cliff, and J. C. Woodward. “Nile Flow Failure at the End of the Old Kingdom, Egypt: Strontium Isotopic and Petrologic Evidence.” *Geoarchaeology* 18 (2003): 395–402.
- Stevenson-Smith, W. *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Steward, Julian H. “Cultural Causality and Law: A Trial Formulation of the Development of Early Civilizations.” *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 51, no. 1 (January–March, 1949): 1–27.
- . “Initiation of a Research Trend: Wittfogel's Irrigation Hypothesis.” In *Society and History: Essays in Honor of Karl August Wittfogel*, edited by G. L. Ulmen, 3–14. The Hague: Mouton, 1978.
- Stevens, Anna. *Private Religion at Amarna: The Material Evidence*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006.
- Storozum, Michael, Haiwang Liu, Zhen Qin, Kongde Ming, Kui Fu, Hui Wang, and Tristram Kidder. “Early Evidence of Irrigation Technology in the North China Plain: Geoarchaeological Investigations at the Anshang Site, Neihuang County, Henan Province, China.” *Geoarchaeology* 33 (2018): 143–61.
- Strudwick, Nigel. *The Tomb of Pharaoh's Chancellor Senneferi at Thebes (TT99)*. Havertown: Oxbow Books, 2016.
- Sun Ji 孫機. *Han dai wuzhi wenhua ziliao tushuo* 漢代物質文化資料圖說. Rev. ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2008.
- . “Xianfan youming zhijian: Han huaxiangshi yu ‘daxiang qisheng’ ” 仙凡幽明之間—漢畫像石與“大象其生.” *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* (2013.9): 81–117.
- . “Zhu Guo gucheng chutu Xin-Mang hengqi de chubu renshi” 邾國故城出土新莽衡器的初步認識. *Kaogu* (2018.8): 39–40.
- Swann, Nancy Lee. *Food and Money in Ancient China: The Earliest Economic History of China to A.D. 25*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Tait, W. J. *Game-Boxes and Accessories from the Tomb of Tutankhamun*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1982.
- Tanner, Jeremy. “Ancient Greece and Early China: Sino-Hellenic Studies and Comparative Approaches to the Classical World. A Review Article.” *JHS* 129 (2009): 89–109.
- Taylor, John H. *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Thatcher, Melvin P. “Marriages of the Ruling Elite in the Spring and Autumn Period.” In *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, edited by Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley

- Ebrey, 25–57. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Thote, Alain. “Daybooks in Archaeological Context.” In *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han*, edited by Donald John Harper and Marc Kalinowski, 11–56. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Tomiya Itaru 富谷至. *Kōryō Chōkasan nihakyūyonjūnana-gō bo shutsudo Kan ritsuryō no kenkyū* 江陵張家山二四七號墓出土漢律令の研究. Kyoto: Hōyū Shoten, 2006.
- Tooley, Angela M. J. *Egyptian Models and Scenes*. Princes Risborough: Shire, 2008.
- . “Middle Kingdom Burial Customs: A Study of Wooden Models and Related Material.” PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 1989.
- Trigger, Bruce G. *Ancient Civilizations: Ancient Egypt in Context*. Cairo: AUC Press, 1993.
- . “Ancient Egypt in Cross-Cultural Perspective.” In *Anthropology and Egyptology: A Developing Dialogue*, edited by Judith Lustig, 137–43. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- . “Egyptology and Anthropology.” In *Egyptology and the Social Sciences: Five Studies*, edited by Kent R. Weeks, 21–56. Cairo: AUC Press, 1979.
- . *Nubia under the Pharaohs*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1976.
- . *Understanding Early Civilizations: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Tseng, Lillian. “Representation and Appropriation: Rethinking the TLV Mirror in Han China.” *EC* 29 (2004): 163–215.
- Tsien, Tsuen-Hsuin. *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books & Inscriptions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Twitchett, Denis, and Michael Loewe, eds. *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 1, *The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Tyldesley, Joyce A. *Judgement of the Pharaoh: Crime and Punishment in Ancient Egypt*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000.
- Ulmen, G. L. *The Science of Society: Toward an Understanding of the Life and Work of Karl August Wittfogel*. The Hague: Mouton, 1978.
- Van De Mierop, Marc. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- van der Plas, Dirk. *L'hymne à la crue du Nil*. 2 vols. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1986.
- . “Nile Hymns.” In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford, 2:143–45. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Voosen, Paul. “Massive Drought or Myth? Scientists Spar over an Ancient Climate Event behind our New Geological Age.” *Science Magazine News* (2018). www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/08/massive-drought-or-myth-scientists-spar-over-ancient-climate-event-behind-our-new#.
- Waddell, W. G. *Manetho*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940.
- Waley, Arthur. “The Heavenly Horses of Ferghana: A New View.” *History Today* 5, no. 2 (1955): 95–103.
- . *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1955.
- Walters, Stanley D. *Water for Larsa: An Old Babylonian Archive Dealing with Irrigation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970.
- Wang, Haicheng. *Writing and the Ancient State: Early China in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Wang Chong 王充. *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋. Edited and annotated by Huang Hui 黃暉. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990.
- Wang Chuning 王楚寧 and Yang Jun 楊軍. “Haihun Hou mu zhushu Wuse shisheng wei ‘liubo qipu’ xiaokao” 海昏侯墓竹書《五色食勝》為「六博棋譜」小考. *Wenhua yichan yu gongzhong kaogu* 3 (2016): 92–95.
- Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed. *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解. Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1933.
- Wang Yi 王逸. *Chuci jiaoshi* 楚辭校釋. Edited by Jiang Tianshu 蔣天樞. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1989.
- Wang Zhongshu. *Han Civilization*. Translated by K. C. Chang et al. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Wang Zijin 王子今. “Wang Mang ‘Zai Heng’ minghao yu duliangheng xinzhi de yiyi” 王莽「宰衡」名號與度量衡新制的意義. *Kaogu* (2018.8): 29–32.

- Warburton, David. *The Fundamentals of Economics: Lessons from the Bronze Age Near East*. Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications, 2016.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- _____. *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- _____. *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Watson, Rubie S., and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, eds. *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*. Mar
- Weinstein, James M. "Byblos." In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford, 1: 219–21. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Weiss, H., M.-A. Courty, W. Wetterstrom, F. Guichard, L. Senior, R. Meadow, and A. Curnow. "The Genesis and Collapse of Third Millennium North Mesopotamian Civilization." *Science* 261 (August 1993): 995–1003.
- Wengrow, David. "Rethinking 'Cattle Cults' in Early Egypt: Towards a Prehistoric Perspective on the Narmer Palette." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 11 (2001): 91–104.
- Wente, Edward. "The Scribes of Ancient Egypt." In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jack M. Sasson, 4: 2211–21. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995.
- Wilkinson, Endymion. *Chinese History: A New Manual*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013.
- Wilkinson, Toby A. *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt: The Palermo Stone and Its Associated Fragments*. London: Kegan Paul International, 2000.
- Wilpert, Joseph, ed. *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms (Tafeln)*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche, 1903.
- Wilson, John. A. "The Nature of the Universe." In *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, edited by Henri Frankfort et al., 35–43. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.
- Winlock, Herbert E. "A Discovery of Egyptian Jewelry by X-ray." *MMAB* 31, no. 12 (1936): 274–78.
- _____. "The Egyptian Expedition 1918–1920: II. Excavations at Thebes 1919–20." *MMAB* 15, no. 12 (1920): 12–32.
- _____. *Excavations at Deir El Bahri, 1911–1931*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942.
- _____. *Models of Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: From the Tomb of Meket-Rē' at Thebes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.
- _____. "The Mummy of Wah Unwrapped." *MMAB* 35 no. 12 (1940): 253–59.
- _____. *The Treasure of Three Egyptian Princesses*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1948.
- Wittfogel, Karl August. "Die Theorie der orientalischen Gesellschaft." *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 7 (1938): 90–122.
- _____. "The Hydraulic Civilizations." In *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, edited by William L. Thomas, 152–64. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- _____. *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957.
- Wright, Henry. "Toward an Explanation of the Origin of the State." In *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, edited by R. Cohen and E. Service, 49–68. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978.
- Wu, Hung. "Art and Architecture of the Warring States Period." In *Cambridge History of Ancient China*, edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, 651–744. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- _____. *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.
- _____. "On Tomb Figurines: The Beginning of a Visual Tradition." In *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang, 13–47. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005.
- _____. "The Prince of Jade Revisited: Material Symbolism of Jade as Observed in the Mancheng Tomb." In *Chinese Jades*, edited by Rosemary E. Scott, 147–69. London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1997.
- _____. *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

- Xi'an Shi Wenwu Baohu Kaogusuo 西安市文物保護考古所, ed. "Xi'an Zhangjiapu Xin-Mang mu fajue jianbao" 西安張家堡新莽墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (2009.5): 4–20.
- Yangzhou Bowuguan 揚州博物館, ed. "Jiangsu Yizheng xupu 101 hao Xi-Han mu" 江蘇儀征胥浦101號西漢墓. *Wenwu* (1987.1): 1–19.
- Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂 and Xiao Ding 肖丁, eds. *Yinxu jiagu keci moshi zongji* 殷墟甲骨刻辭羣釋總集. 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988.
- Yates, Robin D. S. "Soldiers, Scribes, and Women: Literacy among the Lower Orders in Early China." In *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, edited by Li Feng and David Branner, 339–69. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011.
- Yü, Ying-shih. "Han Foreign Relations." In *Cambridge History of China*, edited by Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, 1:377–462. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- . "O Soul, Come Back! A Study in the Changing Perceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China." *HJAS* 47 (1989): 363–95.
- . *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- Yuan Zhongyi 袁仲一. *Qin Shihuang ling kaogu faxian yu yanjiu* 秦始皇陵考古發現與研究. Xi'an: Shaanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2002.
- Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin Mu Bianxiezu 雲夢睡虎地秦墓編寫組, ed. *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu* 雲夢睡虎地秦墓. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1981.
- Zába, Z. *Les Maximes de Ptahhotep*. Prague: Editions de L'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956.
- Zaccagnini, Carlo. "The Interdependence of the Great Powers." In *Amarna Diplomacy*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 141–53. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- . "On Late Bronze Age Marriages." In *Studi in onore di Edda Bessicani*, edited by S. F. Bondi, 593–605. Pisa: Giardini, 1985.
- Zhang, Ling. *The River, the Plain, and the State: An Environmental Drama in Northern Song China, 1048–1128*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Zhang Defang 張德芳. "Xuanquan Han jian de Wusun ziliao kaozheng" 懸泉漢簡的烏孫資料考證. *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 15 (2016): 358–68.
- Zhang Xiaoli 張小麗. "Xi'an Zhangjiapu Xin-Mang chutu jiuding ji qi xiangguan wenti" 西安張家堡新莽出土九鼎及其相關問題. *Wenwu* (2009.5): 53–55.
- Zhao Zhijun 趙志軍. "Yangshao wenhua shiqi nonggeng shengchan de fazhan he nongye shehui de jianli: Yuhuaazhai yizhi fuxuan jieguo de fenxi" 仰韶文化時期農耕生產的發展和農業社會的建立-魚化寨遺址浮選結果的分析. *Jiang-Han kaogu* (2017.6): 98–108.
- Zhongguo Huaxiangshi Quanjì Bianjì Weiyuanhui 中國畫像石全集編輯委員會, ed. *Zhongguo huaxiangshi quanjì* 中國畫像石全集. 8 vols. Jinan: Shandong Meishu Chubanshe, 2000.
- Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, ed. *Xi-Han lizhi jianzhu yizhi* 西漢禮制建築遺址. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2003.
- Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 and Hebei Sheng Wenwu Guanlichu 河北省文物管理處, eds. *Mancheng Han mu fajue baogao* 滿城漢墓發掘報告. 2 vols. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1980.
- Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Hancheng Gongzuodui 中國社會科學院考古研究所漢城工作隊, ed. "Han Chang'an cheng yihao yaozhi fajue jianbao" 漢長安城一號窯址發掘簡報. *Kaogu* (1991.1): 18–22.
- , ed. "Han Chang'an cheng 23–27 yaozhi fajue jianbao" 漢長安城 23–27 號窯址發掘簡報. *Kaogu* (1994.11): 986–95.
- Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Hanchengdui 中國社會科學院考古研究所漢城隊, ed. "Han Chang'an cheng yaozhi fajue baogao" 漢長安城窯址發掘報告. *Kaogu xuebao* (1994.1): 99–129.
- Zhoukou Diqu Wenhuaju Wenwu Deng 周口地區文化局文物科等, ed. "Huaiyang yuzhuang Han mu fajue jianbao" 淮陽于莊漢墓發掘簡報. *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1983.1): 1–3.

INDEX

A

Abydos, [22map](#), 108, 188, [270n2](#)

acacia, 78–79, 197. *See also* [wood](#)

Account of the Kingdoms South of Mount Hua, 33. *See also* [Huayang guozhi](#)

administration: of the Chinese periphery, 50–51, 53, 81; Chinese structure, 151, 168, 196; court, 87, 102, 122; of the Egyptian periphery, 49, 51–52, 61; Egyptian structure, 157, 175–76, 188, 195; laws of, 15, 17, 117; by scribes, 13, 141–42, 149–50, 151–52, 157, 170; of waterworks, 31, 37, 42, 47

Admonitions of Ipuwer, 38

adultery, 120, 122, 128–33, 140, 229

afterlife: aspirational status for, 165–66, 174, 180, 191–93, 205–6, 232; Buddhist concepts of, 226; Chinese concepts of, 17, 28, 106, 121; Christian concepts of, 227; for commoners, 165–66, 191–93, 205–6, 208; democratization of, 15; desire for immortality, 155–56, 208, 222–23; Egyptian concepts of, 17, 106, 108, 200; games as metaphor for, 161, 167, 218–19, 220–27, 232; Greek concepts of, 226–27; Heaven (Chinese), 37, 56–58, 93, 216, 219, 228; Marsh of Offerings, 210–11, 274n10; Marsh of Reeds, 18, 209–14, 216, 218, 226–27, 275n15, 275n19, [plate 19](#), [plate 20](#); Mount Kunlun, 216–17, 218–19, 222, 226–27; postmortem judgement, 211, 219, 227; postmortem paradise, 207–9, 222–23, 232; provisions for, 165–67, 171–72, 190, 201–2, 205, 208, 211, 232; for royalty, 208; scribal identity in, 157–69; transportation to/in, 191, 205, 213–14, 223–25; underworld, 209–10, 211, 213, 224–25; Yellow Springs, 215

agriculture: Chinese, 28, 30, 53; Egyptian, 29–30, 35, 213–14. *See also* [farming](#)

Ahhotep, 160, 175

Ahmose, King, 52

akh, 209, 210, 212

Akhenaten, King: architectural program of, 93–95, [95fig.](#); art style of, 93–94, [94fig.](#), [95fig.](#), [99fig.](#), 100, 261n77, [plate 4](#), [plate 5](#); *damnatio memoriae* of, 101–2, 106–8, [107fig.](#), [109fig.](#), 111–12, 153; domestic policy and leadership of, 54, 75, 88–89, 92, 95–96, 99, [99fig.](#), 102, 105, 111; family of, 71, 73, 86, 93, [95fig.](#), [99fig.](#), 104, 106–7, [107fig.](#), 258n122, [plate 4](#); foreign policy and relations of, 63, 64, 73, 75, 79–80, 102–5, 258n107, 258n122; name of, 87, 90; reforms of, 15–16, 85–90, 98–101, 111–12, 229; as religious mediator, 98–100, [99fig.](#), 111, 253n95, [plate 4](#), [plate 5](#). *See also* [Amenhotep IV](#)

akhet, 214

Akhetaten, [22map](#); as administrative capital, 54, 86, 95, [99fig.](#), 101, 104, 106; as religious capital, 87, 90, 93, 98, [99fig.](#), 101. *See also* [Tell el-Amarna](#)

Akkadian: empire, 38; language, 54

Alashiya, [22map](#), 54. *See also* [Cyprus](#)

All under Heaven, 29, 228. *See also* [Tianxia](#)

Amarna: administration, 73; art, 93–94, [94fig.](#), 100, 261n77, [plate 4](#), [plate 5](#); period, 108, 253n100; site. *See also* [Tell el-Amarna](#)

Amarna Letters, 54, [55fig.](#); diplomatic negotiations in, 59, 61–62, 71, 74, 79, 105; envoys mentioned in, 62, 64; salutation formulas in, 55, 58; as textual source, 79, 90, 105

Amenemhet, 130–32

Amenemhat I, King, 175, 193–94

Amenemhat III, King, 35

Amenemhat IV, King, [plate 6a](#)

Amenhotep I, King, 119fig., 126
 Amenhotep II, King, 83–84
 Amenhotep III, King, 54, 55fig., 57–59, 62, 70–74, 77, 79, 84, 87, 108, 256n61, 260n13
 Amenhotep IV, King, 62, 73, 85, 87, 94, 256n61. *See also* Akhenaten
 Amenhotep (son of Hapu), 84
 Amennakht (son of Ipuy), 126–28, 131, 136, 155, 156
 Amenpanefer, 124
 Amitabha, 226–27
 Amun(-Re): cult of, 36, 80, 88, 102, 112; as divine judge, 131; in mythology, 42, 80, 112; priesthood, 36, 80, 84; temple of, 79, 84, 87, 89
 Amurru, 22map, 61, 80
Analects, 155, 168. *See also* Lunyu
 Anhui, 178
 Ani, 212, plate 19
 Ankhtify, 38
Answers to Questions on Legal Principles and Statutes, 123. *See also* Falü dawen
 Anubis (deity), 213
 Anubis (literary character), 129
 Anyang, 188
 architecture: building materials for, 79, 94–95; industrial, 173, 175, 180, 200, plate 9, plate 11; models of, 13, 17, 171, 173–76, 178–80, 181fig., 185, 191, 193, 195, 200–204; palace, 79, 94; residential, 175–76, 180, 185, 193, 195, plate 10; temple, 86, 93–95; tomb, 93
 archives, 31–32, 54, 120, 122, 148, 155–56, 168, 170. *See also* Amarna Letters
 art: Amarna, 93–94, 94fig., 95fig., 99fig., 100, 261n77, plate 4, plate 5; Chinese, 222; Egyptian, 199; funerary, 185, 212, 218; Hellenistic influences, 185; international style, 60fig., 60–61, plate 3; royal commissions, 72, 93, 100; study of, 4, 9, 21, 92, 185
 Artatama, 71
 artisans, 28, 141, 193–95
 Arzawa, 22map, 71
 Asiatics, 38
 Assmann, Jan, 105, 214, 253n100
 Assyria, 22map, 52, 54, 64, 71, 112
 Astarte, 79
 Aswan, 21, 22map, 45; High Dam, 21–22; Low Dam, 21
 Aten, 86, 87, 89, 93–94, 95fig., 98, 99fig., 100, 106, 107fig., plate 4
 Atenism, 86, 93, 100, 253n95. *See also* religion
 Atum, 224
 Atumemtanab, 60fig., 61, 64, plate 3
 Avaris, 22map, 52
 Ay, King, 106, 108

B
ba (soul), 209, 212, 213–14, 225, 233
 Ba'alat Gebal, 79
 Babylon, 22map; international correspondence, 53–54, 55, 57, 59, 63, 105; language of, 54, 58, 61–63; legal code, 115, 125, 139; marriage diplomacy, 70–72, 74, 75, 77; tribute from, 52; tribute to, 59
 Bai Qi, General, 34
 Baines, John, 11, 42
 Bajiaolang, 168
Bamboo Bundles for Rapid Attainment, 149. *See also* Jiji pian
Bamboo Bundles of Cangjie, 149, 154. *See also* Cangjie pian
 bamboo slips, 120, 134, 135fig., 136, 142, 144–45, 148, 191
 Ban Gu, 12, 109; on diplomacy, 54; on economy, 102; family of, 109; on foreign relations, 104; on law, 121; on scribes, 156; on Wang Mang, 86–87, 96, 97, 102, 104, 110–11; on waterways, 32
 Bar Yusef, 34–35
 barley, 29, 43, 212
 Bata (literary character), 129
 Beirut, 79
 Beni Hassan, 22map, 175, 195, 196, 200

Bersha Procession, 178, 204, [plate 13](#). *See also* [tomb models](#)
 Black Land, 25, 29, 209, 228
 board games. *See* [game boards](#)
 boats, 79, 80; depictions of, 213, [plate 18](#), [plate 19](#), [plate 20](#); models of, 174, 175, 176fig., 177–78, 191, 200, 205 (*see also* [tomb models](#)). *See also* [transportation](#)
 book knife, 145, 162fig. *See also* [shudao](#)
Book of Documents, 96. *See also* [Shangshu](#)
Book of Gates, 224
Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases, 120–21, 125, 132, 155. *See also* [Zouyan shu](#)
Book of the Dead, 169, 209, 211–14, 218–19, 225, 227, 272n65, 275n19, [plate 17](#), [plate 19](#)
 Books of Hapy, 46
 Breasted, James Henry, 85
 bride-price, 65, 68, 70, 71, 74, 75, 258n107
 bronze: as Chinese art medium, 88, 96–97, 96fig., 144, 160–63, 162fig., 167, 179, 184fig., 185–86, 196, 201, 219, 220fig., 222, 233; as Chinese raw material, 146, 147fig., 166, 197; as currency, 91, 92fig., 146, 147fig., 180, 229, 251n26 (*see also* [currency](#)); as Egyptian art medium, 137, 160, 161fig., 166; as Egyptian raw material, 124
 Bubastis, 22map, 60. *See also* [Tell Basta](#)
 Buddhism, 17, 88, 208, 226, 275n25. *See also* [religion](#)
 Buhen, 22map, 48
 Bureau of Merit, 150–51, 163, 168
 bureaucracy: Chinese administration, 50–51, 53, 94, 150, 230; Chinese development of, 28, 229; Egyptian administration, 52, 94–95, 150; Egyptian development of, 230; in social worldview, 208
 burials: denial of, 86, 108; destruction of, 106–7; inclusion of decoration, 75, 76fig., 86, 210, 213, [plate 7](#), [plate 20](#); inclusion of models and figurines, 172–88, 192, 199–200, [plate 16](#); inclusion of offerings, 96–97, 157–65, 159fig., 162fig., 164fig., 168–69, 208, [plate 7](#); inclusion of texts, 100, 120–21, 151–52, 168–69, 210; protective measures, 222; sacrificial, 171–72, 188–89, 270n2; sumptuary access to, 84
 Byblos, 22map, 62, 79–80. *See also* [Jubayl](#)

C

Canaan, 22map, 52
 Cangjie pian, 149, 154. *See also* [Bamboo Bundles of Cangjie](#)
 cannibalism, 38, 102
 carriages, 161; models of, 179–80, 191, 197, 201, 205 (*see also* [tomb models](#)). *See also* [transportation](#)
 cavalry, 52
 cedar, 52, 78–80, 197. *See also* [wood](#)
 Central Asia, 16, 49; Chinese colonization of, 51–53
 ceramic, 96, 96fig., 98, 98fig., 173, 179, 186, 188, 190, 204
 Chang'an, 25map, 53, 68, 70, 81, 90, 97, 194, 195, 257n99
 Changsha, 61, 196
 Changxin Palace Lamp, 194, 196
 chanyu, 54, 56–58, 64, 66–67, 103
 chaos: in Chinese religious and political thought, 36, 91, 105, 139; in Egyptian religious and political thought, 44, 114–15, 139
 chariots: in China, 186, [plate 16](#); in Egypt, 72–73, 74, 75. *See also* [transportation](#)
 Cheng, Emperor (of Han), 88, 89, 97
 Cheng, King (of Zhou), 85
 Chengdu, 25map, 33
 Chengxiang, 120
 Chiang Kai-shek, 34
 Chinese historical periods, 14fig. *See name of individual period*
 Christian period, 42
 Christianity, 17, 85, 208, 220, 227. *See also* [religion](#)
 Chu, 40, 69, 178–79, 197, 215, 216
 Chuci, 41. *See also* [Elegies of Chu](#)
Classic of Mountains and Seas, 40, 217. *See also* [Shanhaijing](#)
 clerical script, 149, [plate 6b](#)

cloth. *See* [textile](#)

Coffin Texts, [43–44](#), [190](#), [199](#), [210–11](#), [212](#), [plate 18](#)

coffins: in Chinese burials, [134](#), [160–63](#), [162fig.](#), [164fig.](#), [165](#), [168](#), [179–80](#), [185](#), [188](#), [201](#); in Chinese funerary ritual, [132](#), [201](#), [205](#); construction of [178](#), [194](#), [201–2](#); decorative program, [192](#), [202](#), [211](#), [217–20](#), [220fig.](#), [plate 18](#); in Egyptian burials, [79](#), [124–25](#), [145](#), [157–58](#), [160](#), [166–67](#), [175](#), [176fig.](#), [177](#), [200](#); in Egyptian funerary ritual, [170](#), [188](#), [199–200](#), [205](#); ownership of, [192](#), [194](#), [195](#); Egyptian texts on, [43](#), [190](#), [201](#), [210](#), [212](#)

coinage: as archaeological dating method, [251n26](#); as burial good, [146](#), [147fig.](#), [166](#), [180](#), [192](#); debasement of, [91–92](#), [94](#), [102](#), [229](#), [260n40](#); imperial use, [84](#), [97](#), [125](#); material culture, [86](#), [89](#), [219–20](#), [220fig.](#); minting of, [91](#), [92fig.](#), [94](#), [229–30](#). *See also* [currency](#)

colonization: Chinese frontier, [50–51](#), [52–53](#), [82](#); Egyptian frontier, [49–50](#), [52](#), [82](#)

commanderies, [50](#), [93](#), [104](#), [116](#), [231](#). *See also* [jun](#)

comparative studies, [3–12](#), [85](#), [112–13](#); benefits of, [4–5](#); Egypt-China comparisons, [11–12](#), [85–86](#), [228–33](#); Greece-China comparisons, [8–9](#); methodologies of, [5–6](#); pitfalls of, [6–8](#); Rome-China comparisons, [9–10](#)

Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores, [33](#). *See also* [Fengsu tongyi](#)

Confucianism, [16](#), [32](#), [36–37](#), [85](#), [89](#), [91](#), [96](#), [103](#), [155](#), [170](#), [192](#)

Confucius, [36](#), [116](#)

consorts: families of, [77–78](#), [83–84](#), [112](#); in China, [40](#), [41](#), [66–67](#), [69–70](#), [182](#), [194](#), [201](#); in Egypt, [46](#), [75](#), [196](#)

copper, [50](#), [143fig.](#), [146](#), [158](#), [160](#), [197](#)

correspondence: administrative, [108](#); Chinese diplomatic letters, [53–54](#), [55–57](#), [61](#), [65–70](#); to the dead, [233](#); diplomatic letter genre, [15](#), [56–59](#), [61](#); Egyptian diplomatic letters, [53–54](#), [55fig.](#), [57](#), [61–62](#), [70–75](#), [79](#), [105](#) (*see also* [Amarna Letters](#)); personal, [122](#), [156](#); in scribal education, [148](#), [150](#), [153](#), [160](#); to the underworld, [233](#)

cosmic order: Chinese conceptions of, [115–16](#), [117](#); Egyptian conceptions of, [42](#), [114](#), [128](#)

cowrie shell, [91](#). *See also* [currency](#)

crime: in the Chinese worldview, [116–17](#), [125–26](#), [129–30](#), [139](#); in the Egyptian worldview, [114–15](#), [126–29](#), [139](#)

cuneiform, [54](#), [55fig.](#), [62](#), [150](#)

currency, [166](#); bronze, [91](#), [92fig.](#), [229](#), [251n26](#); coinage, [84](#), [91–92](#), [92fig.](#), [94](#), [97](#), [102](#), [125](#), [229–30](#), [260n40](#); copper, [194](#); cowrie shell, [91](#); gold, [91](#), [118](#), [128](#); grain, [102](#), [122](#), [151](#), [194](#); silver, [57](#), [80](#), [91](#); tortoise shell, [91](#)

Cyprus, [22map](#), [52](#), [54](#), [62](#), [64](#), [80](#), [105](#). *See also* [Alashiya](#)

D

Dai, Lady, [182](#), [183fig.](#), [185](#), [195–96](#), [200–201](#), [202](#), [203](#), [plate 15](#)

Daliang, [34](#)

damnatio memoriae, [106–11](#)

Dayuan, [25map](#), [52](#), [53](#), [81](#)

Deir el-Bersha, [22map](#), [177](#), [196](#), [211](#), [plate 13](#), [plate 18](#)

Deir el-Medina, [22map](#); cemetery, [45](#), [122](#), [138](#), [plate 20](#); village, [119](#), [122](#), [126](#), [130–31](#), [136](#), [145](#), [152](#); villagers of, [129](#), [130–33](#), [152](#), [213](#), [264n14](#)

Delta, [15](#), [24](#), [35](#), [80](#), [83](#), [210](#), [211](#)

desecration, [88–89](#), [97–98](#), [101–2](#), [107–8](#), [124–25](#), [139](#)

determinism, [7](#)

Di, [39](#)

Diodorus Siculus, [115](#), [121](#)

diplomacy: of the Chinese administration, [55–56](#), [58–60](#), [103–4](#); comparative studies, [16](#); correspondence, [53–64](#); of the Egyptian administration, [55](#), [57](#), [60](#), [84](#), [104–5](#); envoys, [51](#), [53–64](#), [66](#), [68](#), [71](#), [80–81](#), [105](#); marriage, [51](#), [58](#), [61](#), [62](#), [63](#), [65–78](#), [229](#), [257n85](#), [257n103](#), [258n122](#); peer-polity relationships, [53](#), [55–57](#), [65](#), [68](#), [75](#), [104](#), [229](#); resource, [52](#), [78–82](#); strategy, [53](#); vassal relationships, [53](#), [59](#), [65](#), [66–67](#), [72](#), [74–75](#), [77](#), [104–5](#)

Discourses on Salt and Iron, [192](#). *See also* [Yantie lun](#)

disease, [105](#), [222](#), [263n112](#)

disorder. *See* [chaos](#)

divination, [39–40](#), [97](#), [214](#), [216](#), [226](#). *See also* [oracles](#)

divorce, [129](#)

Djehuty, [143fig.](#), [145](#), [158–60](#), [161fig.](#), [166–69](#)

Djehutynakht, [176–77](#), [182](#), [195](#), [203](#); coffin of, [201](#); figurines of, [178](#), [194](#), [203–5](#), [plate 13](#);

models of, 176–77, 191, 194, 197–98, 200, 203, 205; tomb of, 196
Djer, King, 188
djet, 214
Djet, King, 188
Djoser, King, 261n57
Dong Zhongshu, 36–37
Donghai Commandery, 150–52, 163
Dou Wan, 182, 184*fig.*, 185, 194, 196
dowry, 64, 65, 66, 71, 73, 74, 75, 129
drought: in China, 39, 105; in Egypt, 35, 37–38
duat, 209–10, 211, 213, 224–25. *See also* afterlife
Dujiangyan diversion network, 25*map*, 30, 33
Duke Ling of Qin, 41. *See also* Qin Ling Gong

E

Earl of the Yellow River, 40*fig.*, 40–42. *See also* Feng Yi; He Bo
Early Dynastic period, 172, 188–89
Eastern Han dynasty, 112, 155, 191
Eastern Zhou period, 34, 65
economy: agricultural, 24, 27, 32, 37–38, 102; cash, 15, 84, 91–92, 102, 194, 219, 229;
international, 60, 63–64, 67, 78–79, 82, 101; market, 16, 20, 28, 194, 219, 229; reform, 85, 87,
89, 91–92, 96–97, 101–2, 105, 174; temple, 84, 93, 102; trade, 60, 67, 78–79
education: hostage, 49, 52–53, 70, 75, 81–82; military, 75; palace, 55, 77; of the periphery, 66;
scribal, 141–42, 150, 2676n25
Egyptian historical periods, 14*fig.* *See name of individual period*
Eighteenth Dynasty: burial practices, 145, 158, 168, 178; diplomacy, 16, 62, 74; empire, 48–49,
51, 83; language, 90; law, 119; marriage, 74, 77; reform, 15, 85; religion, 15, 84, 119, 224;
royal ideology, 153; warfare, 15, 48, 51–52, 104, 230
el-Lahun. *See* Lahun, el-
Elegies of Chu, 41. *See also* Chuci
Elephantine, 22*map*, 31, 131
Eleventh Dynasty, 16, 157, 174–75, 176–77, 188
Elysian Fields, 226–27
emmer, 29, 43, 137–38, 212
emperor, 36–37, 231–32. *See also* kingship: Chinese
empire: Chinese organization of, 50–51, 61, 80–82; Chinese territorial expansion of, 48–50, 52–
53, 81; decline of, 83–85; Egyptian organization of, 52, 61, 81–82; Egyptian territorial
expansion of, 48–49, 51–52, 78–80, 83–84; formation of, 48, 52; semantics of, 49. *See also*
imperialism
envoys: from China, 51, 53, 55, 62–64, 66, 77, 81; to China, 54, 55, 63–64, 66, 68; credentials of,
61, 63; from Egypt, 52, 61–64, 71, 74, 80; to Egypt, 63–64, 71, 105; merchant activities of, 63;
need for, 15, 51–52, 65; role of, 16, 50, 53–64, 66–67, 82; social background of, 62–63, 75;
terms for, 61–62; treatment of, 56–57, 59, 63–64, 81
Eritrea, 104. *See also* Punt
essentialism, 7, 228
Ethiopia, 21, 37
Euphrates River, 22*map*, 48, 52, 53, 71, 79
exceptionalism, 7
execration texts, 79

F

fa, 116. *See also* law: Chinese practices of
faience, 143*fig.*, 158
Faiyum, 21, 22*map*, 34–35, 47
Falū dawen, 123. *See also* *Answers to Questions on Legal Principles and Statutes*
famine: in China, 32, 38, 102; in Egypt, 38
farming: Chinese practices of, 28, 30; Egyptian practices of, 29–30, 35. *See also* agriculture
fecundity figure, 42, 254n112, 261n77
Feng Yi, 40. *See also* Earl of the Yellow River; He Bo

Fenghuangshan, 146
 Fensu tongyi, 33. See also *Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores*
 Fengzhen shi, 129–30. See also *Models for Sealing and Physical Examinations*
 Ferghana valley, 53
 Fifth Dynasty, 79, 172, 210
 figurines, 17, 167, 171, 232; administrative, 177; animal, 174, 176–77, 186, 187fig., 191, 200, 202–3; Chinese development of, 178–88; Egyptian development of, 172–78; entertainment, 173, 178–83, 180fig., 181fig., 183fig., 185, 191, plate 15; function of, 188–93, 201; life-sized, 185–86, 203; materiality of, 196–99; offering-bearers, 171, 174, 176–77, 193–94, plate 12, plate 13; production, 173–74, plate 8, plate 14; scale of, 202–5; servant, 17, 172, 175, 179, 182, 183fig., 184fig., 190–91, 194, 203, 205, plate 15 (see also *shabti*); social context of, 195–96, 201; as tableaux, 179–80, 188; warrior, 185–88, 187fig., 191, 203, plate 16.
 fir, 79. See also *wood*
 First Dynasty, 24, 108, 172, 223, 270n2
 First Emperor of Qin. See *Qin Shihuang*
 First Intermediate Period, 24, 38, 79, 174
Five Colored Pieces Eat Their Way to Victory, The, 222. See also *Wuse shisheng*
 flax, 29, 174, 213
 flooding: in China, 28, 30, 32–34, 36–37, 39, 105; Chinese records of, 31–32; in Chinese religious thought, 36–37; in Egypt, 23–24, 29, 34–35, 42; Egyptian records of, 31, 36, 38; in Egyptian religious thought, 36, 228; as warfare tactic, 34
 foreigners: Chinese conceptions of, 50, 58, 61, 77; Chinese diplomatic interactions with, 54, 55–57, 61, 68–70, 77; Egyptian conceptions of, 35–36, 49, 74, 79; Egyptian diplomatic interactions with, 54, 57, 61–62, 71–74, 79; hybridity of, 51, 73, 75
 fortifications, 48, 50, 52
 Fourth Dynasty, 79, 172

G
 game boards: as afterlife metaphor, 161, 213, 219fig., 220–23, 224–25, 225fig., 232; as afterlife navigational tool, 161, 167, 225–26, 227; depictions of, 213, 218, 219fig., 220, 225fig.; as funerary offering, 162fig., 221, 223fig.; as marker of status, 161, 167; in ritual, 16, 167, 218, 219fig., 227; rules for, 221–22, 223–25
 Gansu, 26, 121, 179
 Gaozu, Emperor, 62–63, 66–67, 109, 124
 Gate of Heaven, 219–20, 220fig. See also *Tianmen*
 Gaza, 52
 Gebel el-Silsila, 22map, 45–46
 gender, 9, 37, 85, 93, 139, 191, 196
 geographic determinism, 49
 gift exchange: for envoys, 64–65, 60fig., plate 3; examples of, 60–61, 60fig., 78–82; plate 3; as form of trade, 60, 78; marriage, 66, 68–6, 71, 73; negotiations of, 59–60, 66–67, 72, 80, 103, 105; for officials, 94, 95fig.; personal, 64–65. See also *tribute*
 Gilukhepa, 71–73, 78, 258n107
 Giza, 200
 glass, 166, 169
Going Forth by Day. See *Book of the Dead*
 gold: as currency, 57, 81, 91, 118, 122, 128, 134, 202; in funerary objects, 124, 145, 158, 166, 185; in gift exchange, 57, 59, 71–75, 81, 82, 104–5, 258n107–8; as offering, 45–46, 124; as resource, 49–50, 52, 59, 104
 graffiti, 31, 150, 153
 grain: as crop, 24, 28, 33, 38–39, 174, 192, 212–13, 216; as offering, 175, 178–79, 190, 197, 211; as payment, 102, 122, 151, 194. See also *currency*
 Grand Canal, 20
 Great Ennead, 213
 Great Game Text, 224–25
 Great Harris Papyrus, 45–46
 Great Hymn to Aten, 86, 100, 253n100, 260n35
 Great Hymn to the Nile, 43–45, 253n100
 Great Wall, 48, 65; as political border, 66
 Greco-Roman period, 31, 208

Greece, 3, 7–9, 20
Gu Yong, 37

H

Haaramassi, 62, 265n61. *See also* [Ramose](#)
Haihun (Marquis), 222
Hammurabi, 54, 139, 264n26
Han: administration, 58–59, 62–64, 66–70, 77; afterlife belief, 215, 216–17, 218, 226; agriculture, 33, 104; comparative study of, 4, 9–10, 12–13, 15–16; courts, 120–21; diplomacy, 50–51, 53–56, 58–59, 61, 64, 66–70, 73, 75, 81, 103; economy, 15, 52, 71, 81, 91–92, 102, 208, 219; education, 154; empire, 15–16, 25map, 49, 50–53, 55–56, 77, 82, 151, 228; flooding, 32; funerary culture, 179–80, 188, 190, 193–94, 200, 204, 218; history of, 97, 109–11; laws, 116, 118, 121–22, 125, 128, 130–31, 133–34, 222; material culture, 17, 63, 71, 144, 222; overthrow of, 85, 88–89, 90, 91, 94, 97; period, 12, 84, 112, 188; ritual practice, 33, 41, 63, 81, 200, 222; rulers, 16, 50, 57, 71, 77–78, 110, 123, 182, 186; scribes, 149–50, 151, 155; tombs, 17, 96, 179–80, 186, 190, 196, 200–201, 219; warfare, 50, 52–53, 59; waterworks, 33
Han shu, 32, 54, 69, 86–87, 109–11, 121, 218. *See also* *History of the Han*
Hapy, 42–47, 224, 253n95, 253n103, 261n77, *plate 2*
Hare Nome, 176, 196
harem, 73, 74, 75, 77
Hathor, 79
Hatshepsut, King (f.), 108, 119, 153, 158
He, 38–39, 41
He Bo, 40–42. *See also* [Earl of the Yellow River](#); [Feng Yi](#)
Heaven, 37, 56–58, 93, 106, 216, 219, 228. *See also* [afterlife](#)
Heavenly Thearch, 217. *See also* [Tiandi](#)
Heliopolis, 45–46, 120
Heqanakht, 265n38
heqin treaties, 66–68, 70, 73
Herihor, 80
Herodotus, 11, 46, 121
Hexi Corridor, 25map, 50–51, 53, 68
hieratic, 54, 55fig., 62, 149, 154, 198, *plate 6a*
hieroglyphs, 150, 154
High Priests of Amun, 36, 80, 112
History of the Han, 32, 54, 69, 86–87, 109–11, 121, 218. *See also* [Han shu](#)
Hittite empire, 22map, 52, 54, 70, 73, 74, 75, 80, 104, 105, 153
Horemheb, King, 107, 108, 112, 115
horses: in China, 52, 59, 68, 70, 75, 80–82, 189; in Egypt, 71–73, 74, 75, 82, 258n107; models of, 180, 186, 194
Horus, 36, 114, 224
hostages: court, 51, 105; envoys, 55, 105; princes, 49, 52–53, 55, 70, 75, 77, 81–82, 104
Huan Kuan, 192
Huan River, 39
Huangdi, 97. *See also* [Yellow Emperor](#)
Huanghe, 25. *See also* [Yellow River](#)
Huangquan, 215. *See also* [Yellow Springs](#)
Huangzhi, 103
Huayang guozhi, 33. *See also* *Account of the Kingdoms South of Mount Hua*
Huayankou, 34
Huhanye, 103
hun (spirit soul), 214
Huo Qubing, General, 53
Huzi, 41
hydraulic civilizations: theory of, 11, 19–20. *See also* [Wittfogel](#), [Karl](#)
hydraulic engineering, 20–21; Chinese, 31, 32–34, 37, 42; Egyptian, 34–35
Hyksos, 15, 51, 52, 83, 108, 230, 257n85
hymns, 42–45, 86, 100, 108, 153. *See also* [texts](#)

identity: cultural, 24; markers of group, 13, 17, 142, 157, 165–70, 179, 207, 232; markers of personal, 13, 17, 121, 157–58, 165, 166–67

Ili River, 68

imperialism: Chinese conceptions of, 49–51, 82; defensive, 51–52; Egyptian conceptions of, 49, 51, 82; ideological imperative, 51–52. *See also* empire

inheritance: Chinese professions, 149; Chinese property, 133–36; Chinese royal patterns of, 67, 77, 84, 97, 106, 189; Egyptian professions, 149; Egyptian property, 115, 136–39; Egyptian royal patterns of, 84, 106, 189

Inherkhau, 131–32, 136

ink, 54, 142, 144–46, 148, 163, 165, 169

Instructions of Amennakht, 269n66

Instructions of Ptahhotep, 128, 155

inundation, 23–24, 29, 36, 42. *See also* flooding

iron, 61

irrigation, 19; Chinese, 30, 32–34; Egyptian, 29–30, 47

isfet, 114. *See also* chaos: in Egyptian religious and political thought

Ishtar, 73. *See also* Shaushka

Isis, 192, 204

Itjtawy, 35

ivory, 49–50, 59

Iyeferti, 213, 225fig., plate 20

J

jade, 32, 41, 52, 123, 163, 166–67, 185, 197

jewelry, 158, 159fig., 160, 161, 166, 258n107, 269n79

Jijiu pian, 149. *See also* *Bamboo Bundles for Rapid Attainment*

Jing, Emperor, 182, 186–87, 194, 195. *See also* Liu Qi

Jing River, 33

Jingtu, 226. *See also* Pure Land

Jubayl, 79. *See also* Byblos

Judaism, 215. *See also* religion

jun, 50, 93, 104, 116, 231. *See also* commanderies

juniper, 79. *See also* wood

justice: Chinese practices of maintaining, 68, 115–17, 139–40; Egyptian conceptions of, 35–36, 114, 139–40

Juyan, 25map, 121

K

ka: statue, 166–67, 170, 200, 173; soul, 158, 200, 209, 214

Kadašman-Enlil I, 57, 74

Kadesh, 22map, 52; battle of, 153

Kamose, King, 52

Kanmu, Emperor, 87

Karasahr, 104. *See also* Yanqi

Karnak, 79, 84, 87, 89, 94, 100, 195

kemet, 25

Kemp, Barry, 49

Kemyt, 150, 154

kenbet, 118–20, 122, 126, 132, 138, 153

Kerma, 48

Khaemwaset, 125

Khety, 43, 155

Khonsu (personal name), 213, plate 20

Khotan, 52

King Father of the East, 275n24

king list, 108, 109fig., 153

kingship: afterlife beliefs of, 208, 210; artistic expressions of, 61, 100, 108, 109fig., plate 1; Chinese, 36–37, 89, 115–16, 208; comparative studies of, 11, 233; divine, 24, 35–36, 55, 81,

89, 114–15, 119, 139, 228, 260n26; Egyptian, 35–36, 44, 54–55, 89, 100, 114, 154, 174, 208; ideology of, 13, 77, 100, 154, 228, 233; legitimization of, 36, 37, 84, 86, 88, 93, 96–97, 100, 104, 119, 139, 228; Near Eastern, 52, 54–55, 61, 77; regents, 84, 85, 86, 87, 91, 93, 96, 102, 103; succession, 16, 36, 71, 84–85, 86, 88, 93, 97–98, 100, 103–4, 110, 259n2
kinship: Chinese, 77, 78, 97, 134, 232; Egyptian, 84, 89, 136, 230; fictive, 56, 57, 58, 64, 65, 66–67, 73, 75, 82, 229; patrilineal, 65, 78; royal, 74, 84, 89, 97, 153; study of, 13, 230, 232
Kiya, 73, 263n118. *See also* Taduhepa
kunmo, 68–69
Kush, 131. *See also* Nubia

L

lacquer, 144, 161, 162fig., 163, 164fig., 167, 178, 190, 221
Lahun, el-, 22map, 35
Lake Moeris, 22map, 35
Lake Tana, 21
Lake Victoria, 21
Laozi, plate 6b
lapis lazuli, 46, 77, 158, 166
Late Egyptian (language), 90
law: cases, 120–39; Chinese perspectives of, 115–17, 122–24, 128, 129–30; Chinese practices of, 117–18, 125–26, 129–30, 132–36, 139–40; code of, 115, 117, 130, 133–34, 229; courts of, 115, 118–20, 122, 126, 132, 138, 140, 153, 229; Egyptian perspectives of, 114–15, 128–29; Egyptian practices of, 118–20, 124–25, 126–29, 130–33, 136–40; infrastructure, 117–20; inheritance, 133–39; officers of, 118, 120, 122, 132; principles of, 17, 114–17, 139, 229; proactive, 117–18, 140, 229; reactive, 140, 229; sumptuary, 188, 195. *See also* justice; punishment; trials
Lebanon, 52, 71, 79–80, 105, 197
Legalism, 84, 88
Levant, 15–16, 71, 75, 82, 84, 104–5; Egyptian colonization of, 48, 49–51, 52, 79, 81, 228
Li Bing, 33
Li Erlang, 33
Li Guangli, General, 81
libation. *See* offerings; sacrifice
Libya, 104, 112, 233
linen, 143fig., 145, 158, 198. *See also* textile
literacy, 11, 122, 141–42, 149–50, 153–55, 168–69, 232, 270n102
literature. *See* texts
Liu Che, 111
Liu Jian, 68
Liu Jieyou, 69–70, 73, 257n99
Liu Jing, 62, 66–67
Liu Qi, 186. *See also* Jing, Emperor
Liu Sheng, 182, 184fig., 185, 193–94, 195–96, 197, 200–201, 205
Liu Wu, 69
Liu Xijun, 68–69
Liu Xin, 96
Liu Xiu (Guangwu Emperor), 112
Liu Xiu (regional lord), 168–69
liubo, 18, 161, 162fig., 167, 218, 219fig., 220–23, 221fig., 225–27. *See also* game board
Liverani, Mario, 78
Liye site, 121, 231
Lloyd, Geoffrey, 8–9
Loess Plateau, 26
looting, 45, 124–25, 157, 259n130, 261n73, 273n92. *See also* theft
Lower Egypt, 25, 43, 49, 52, 204, 208
Lü, Empress, 61, 66–67
luan, 115. *See also* chaos
Lunyu, 155, 168. *See also* *Analects*
Luo River, 33
Luoyang, 25map, 90, 102, 112, 190, 196

Luxor, [22map](#), [152](#)

M

maat, [35–36](#), [114](#), [212](#). *See also* [justice](#)

Maat (deity), [224](#)

Mancheng site, [25map](#), [182](#), [193](#), [195–96](#), [197](#), [201](#)

Manchu, [77](#)

Mandate of Heaven, [84](#), [89](#), [97](#)

Mane, [62](#). *See also* [Meniu](#)

Manetho, [263n112](#)

Maodun, [56](#), [59](#), [64](#), [66–67](#)

marriage: Chinese diplomatic, [61](#), [62](#), [65–70](#), [257n85](#); Chinese sacrificial, [33](#); as diplomatic strategy, [65–78](#), [75–78](#), [82](#), [229](#), [257n103](#) (*see also* [diplomacy: marriage](#)); Egyptian diplomatic, [57–58](#), [62](#), [70–75](#), [257n103](#); as an expression of sovereignty, [74](#); levirate, [67](#), [73](#); polygynous, [65](#), [67](#), [77](#) (*see also* [polygyny](#))

Marsh of Offerings, [210–11](#), [274n10](#)

Marsh of Reeds, [18](#), [209–14](#), [218](#), [226–27](#), [275n15](#), [275n19](#), [plate 19](#), [plate 20](#)

Marxism, [7](#), [208](#)

mastaba, [200](#)

Master of Huainan, [216](#). *See also* [Huainanzi](#)

Master Zhuang, [41](#), [217](#). *See also* [Zhuangzi](#)

Mawangdui site, [25map](#), [182](#), [185](#), [195](#), [200](#), [203](#), [221](#)

Medinet Habu, [22map](#), [122](#), [plate 2](#)

Mediterranean Sea, [21](#), [22map](#), [60](#)

Medjay, [118](#)

Megiddo, [22map](#), [52](#)

Mehen, [224](#)

Meketre, [157–58](#), [175–76](#), [195](#), [200](#); figurines of, [193–94](#), [204](#), [plate 12](#); models of, [157](#), [176](#), [191](#), [197–98](#), [200](#), [203](#), [plate 9](#), [plate 10](#), [plate 11](#); tomb of, [146](#), [157](#), [177fig.](#), [193](#), [195](#), [200](#), [202](#)

Memphis, [22map](#), [31](#), [35](#), [45](#), [87](#), [92](#), [102](#), [106](#), [173](#), [193](#), [196](#). *See also* [Ijtawy](#)

Menes, King, [108](#)

Meniu, [62](#). *See also* [Mane](#)

Mentuhotep II, King, [175](#), [195](#), [257n85](#)

Mentuhotep III, King, [175](#), [178](#)

merchants, [28](#), [63](#), [90–91](#), [110](#), [180](#), [201](#)

Meritaten, [169](#)

Merneptah, King, [153](#)

Merysekhmet (son of Menna), [130–33](#)

Mesopotamia, [19–20](#), [29](#), [34](#), [38](#), [71](#)

Middle Egyptian (language), [90](#)

Middle Kingdom: administration, [148](#), [157](#), [160](#), [174](#), [188](#); agriculture, [47](#); burial customs, [146](#), [172](#), [174–75](#), [177–78](#), [193–95](#), [201](#), [203–4](#), [211](#); diplomacy, [79](#); funerary beliefs, [43](#), [188](#), [190–91](#), [199](#), [212](#); language, [150](#), [253n100](#); literature, [38](#), [43](#), [155](#); religion, [36](#), [43](#); sources, [12](#), [38](#); tombs, [17](#), [160](#), [175](#), [177](#), [196](#), [200](#); warfare, [48](#); waterworks, [24](#), [34–35](#), [47](#)

Middle Kingdom (Chinese), [37](#)

military: Chinese campaigns, [53](#), [80–81](#); Chinese structure of, [51](#), [52](#), [80–81](#); Egyptian campaigns, [52](#), [71](#), [73](#), [105](#); Egyptian structure of, [52](#), [73](#), [75](#), [149](#). *See also* [warfare](#)

millet, [30](#)

Min River, [33](#)

Ming dynasty, [77](#), [188](#)

mingqi, [189](#)

mirrors, [158](#), [159fig.](#), [161](#), [162fig.](#), [163](#), [166](#), [222](#)

Mitanni empire, [22map](#), [52](#), [54](#), [55fig.](#), [58](#), [62](#), [63–64](#), [70–74](#), [75](#), [78](#), [79](#), [82](#), [105](#)

Models for Sealing and Physical Examinations, [129–30](#). *See also* [Fengzhen shi](#)

Mount Buzhou, [215](#)

Mount Kunlun, [18](#), [215](#), [218–19](#), [222](#), [226–27](#)

Mount Ling, [182](#)

N

Naharin, 71–72. *See also* Mitanni empire
 Nan Commandery, 116, 163
 Nanyue, 25map, 50, 54, 61, 82
 nationalism, 7, 15
 Naunakhte, 122, 136–39, 153, 155
 Nebqed, 209, 215, plate 17
 Nefertiti, Queen, 93, 95fig., 99fig., 104, 106–7, 107fig., plate 4
 Nefery, 175, 176fig., 195, 200
neheh, 214
 Nephthys, 192, 204
 Nesbanebjed, 80. *See also* Smendes
 New Kingdom, 12–17; administration, 35, 83, 122, 124, 229; agriculture, 24, 35; burial practices, 160, 178; economy, 92, 194, 229; education, 149–50; empire, 51–52, 53, 70–78, 79, 82, 228; foreign relations, 49, 51–52, 53, 70–78, 228; funerary beliefs, 160, 167, 175, 178, 191–92, 199, 212, 223; law, 114, 115, 118, 120, 122, 126; reforms, 89; religious beliefs, 36, 43–44, 48, 89, 191–92, 223, 253n100; warfare, 48, 230
 Nile River, 16, 19, 22map, 49, 78; Blue Nile, 21; drought of, 35, 37–38, 37; flooding of, 22–24, 29–31, 228; floodplain of, 23fig., 254n12; religious significance of, 36–37, 42–47, 253n100; shifting course of, 21–25; texts pertaining to, 24, 31, 36, 38, 42–47; White Nile, 21
 Nile valley, 21, 24–25, 43, 83
 nilometer, 31, 33
 Nine Ancestral Temples, 93, 94, 97, 108
 Nineteenth Dynasty: administration, 35, 36, 107–8, 152; foreign relations, 36, 74, 80, 112; religious beliefs, 42, 45, 212, 224
 nomarchs, 174, 176
 nome, 29, 176
 North China Plain, 26, 28, 32
 Northern Song dynasty, 38
 Northern Wei dynasty, 233
 Nubia, 15, 22map, 31, 72, 112; Egyptian colonization of, 48, 49, 81–82, 83, 104, 115, 118
 Nubkhaes, Queen, 124
 Nülangshan site, 25map, 178–79
 Nut, 192

O
 oaths, 115, 119, 131–32, 140
Odyssey, 226
 offerings: to ancestors, 103, 108, 153, 214–15, 222–23; bearers of, 17, 171, 174–78, 193, plate 12, plate 13; to Chinese religious entities, 32–33, 39–40, 41–42, 106; to Egyptian deities, 42–46, 153, 254n110, plate 5; food, 146, 157, 158, 166, 208–9; funerary, 157, 158, 160, 166, 172–73, 190, 195, 201–2, 204–6, plate 7; tribute, 70, 79
 Old Kingdom: administration, 34, 142, 148, 210; art, 170; foreign relations, 79; funerary practices, 172–73, 200, 210, 224; religious beliefs, 36, 43, 89, 93, 172, 191, 210
 opening of the mouth, 209, plate 17. *See also* ritual
 oracles: animal, 103; bone, 39–40, 214, 216; divine, 115, 117, 119–20, 119fig., 122, 126–28, 140, 229; judicial, 115, 117, 119–20, 122, 126–28, 140, 229; royal, 100, 119fig., 126. *See also* divination
 Oryx Nome, 196
 Osiris, 36, 42, 169, 191, 209, 210, 212–13, 214, 224–25
 ostraca, 120, 122, 126–27, 127fig.

P
 Palermo Stone, 31, 36
 Palestine. *See* Syria(-Palestine)
 Palmyra, 60
 Paneb, 129
 papyrus: funerary, 209, 212, 213, 215, plate 17, plate 19; legal, 122, 124–25, 130–32, 131fig., 136, 137fig.; literary, plate 6a; material, 54, 79, 120, 122, 130, 136, 142, 143fig., 145–46, 148, 156; plant, 42, 174; production, 174; ritual, 45–46, 224

Penglai, 216
 Pepy II, King, 38
 Per-Ramesses, 22map, 24
 Persia, 4, 13, 112
 pharaoh, 230. *See also* kingship: Egyptian
 pine, 79. *See also* wood
 Ping, Emperor, 97, 103, 109
 po (corporeal soul), 214
 Polanyi, Karl, 78
 policing, 118, 128, 129, 140, 229
 polygyny, 65, 67, 77. *See also* marriage: polygynous
 Predynastic period, 29, 172, 189
 priesthood: administrative role of, 80, 87, 112, 150; of Amun, 36, 80, 84, 112; ritual actions of, 46, 120, 127, 199, 209; scribes of, 150
 property: government, 122; private, 115, 128, 133–39, 153; sacred, 120, 122–23
 Ptah, 213
 Ptolemaic period, 12, 30, 35, 105, 115, 142
 public works: Chinese projects, 32–34, 47; Egyptian projects, 34–35, 47
 punishment: castration as, 130, 156; for diplomatic crimes, 59; execution as, 103, 108, 115, 116–17, 120, 123–25, 130, 139; exile, 68–69, 115, 131–32; fines, 115, 116–17, 125, 128; hard labor as, 116–17, 120, 123, 125–26, 128, 130, 132; marriage as, 68–69; mutilation as, 115, 116–17, 120, 125–26, 128, 131–32; for perjury, 132; physical, 103, 108, 115, 116–17, 120, 123–26, 128, 130, 131–32, 156; for property damage, 115; restitution as, 128; for robbery, 115, 122–23, 125–28; for treason, 68; for witchcraft, 68
 Punt, 22map, 104. *See also* Eritrea
 Pure Land, 226. *See also* Jingtū
 Pyramid Texts, 36, 43, 169, 210

Q

Qantir, 22map, 24
 Qenherkhapeshef, 137–38, 150, 152–54, 155, 169
 Qi, state of, 178
 Qiang, 50
 Qianlong emperor, 77
 Qin: burials, 160, 179–80, 186, 196; comparative studies of, 4, 13; cultural memory, 89; dynasty, 15, 27, 48; economy, 15; education, 150; empire, 33, 65, 116, 214, 230; laws, 116, 121–22, 125, 128, 129, 140, 149, 163; material culture, 88, 123, 179, 185; political ideology, 230–31; population, 203; ritual tradition, 40, 41, 123; Second Emperor of, 189; warfare, 33, 34, 48, 214, 230; waterworks, 33–34
 Qin Ling Gong, 41. *See also* Duke Ling of Qin
 Qin Shihuang: burial of, 185–88, 189, 195; plate 16; ideological power of, 41, 49, 216; policies of, 88, 90, 231; terracotta warriors of, 80, 186, 189, 197–99, 203, plate 16; territory controlled by, 29, 49, 88, 231
 Qing dynasty, 77
 Queen Mother of the West, 16, 18, 93, 217–20, 219fig., 222, 226–27, 275n24. *See also* Xiwangmu

R

Ramesses II, King, 45, 108, 109fig., 152, 153
 Ramesses III, King, 24, 45, 112, 122, 130, plate 2
 Ramesses IV, King, 45, 126
 Ramesses V, King, 136
 Ramesses IX, King, 124
 Ramesses XI, King, 80, 124
 Ramesside period, 24, 108, 112, 124, 253n100
 Ramose (scribe of the royal tomb), 153
 Ramose (vizier), 62, 73, 107, 107fig., 168, 199, 265n61, plate 7. *See also* Haaramasi
 Rappaport, Roy, 95
 Re(-Harakhte), 209, 213, 214, 224, 275n19
 Records of the Grand Scribe, 32, 33, 40, 54, 109, 121, 123, 156. *See also* Shi ji

Red Eyebrows, 38

Red Land, 25

reforms: artistic, 93, 100, 111; calendric, 90, 94; economic, 91–92, 94, 96, 101, 229; ideological, 89–90, 92–93; linguistic, 90–91, 101; political, 90, 94–95, 101, 229; religious, 87–89, 92, 101, 229

regicide, 38, 70, 102

regional lord, 61, 66, 68–69, 168, 182, 187, 193, 201, 262n96. See also *zhuhou wang*

religion: ancestor worship, 78, 98, 108, 106, 123, 208, 233; Atenism, 86, 93, 100, 253n95; Buddhism, 17, 88, 208, 226, 275n25; Chinese mortuary, 167, 207, 217; Christianity, 17, 85, 208, 220, 227; comparative theologies, 207; Daoism, 32; Egyptian mortuary, 167, 191–92, 207; Greek, 215, 226–27; Judaism, 215; monotheism, 85; mountain worship, 216; Queen Mother of the West cult, 16, 217–20

Report of Wenamen, 80

Restoration Stele, 88, 105

Retenu, 259n129. See also *Syria(-Palestine)*

Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms, 188

Rib-Hadda, 62, 79–80

ritual: board game, 220–26; Chinese administrative, 52, 66, 97, 103; Chinese mortuary, 52, 96–97, 96fig., 161, 165, 167; Chinese sacrifice, 32–33, 40–42, 103; desecration, 88–89, 108; Egyptian mortuary, 35, 52, 165, 209, *plate* 7; Egyptian sacrifice, 45–47, 125; Egyptian temple, 93, 125; opening of the mouth, 209, *plate* 17; texts, 36, 39, 79, 120, 199–200, 225

Rituals of the Zhou, 91, 96. See also *Zhouli*

robbery. See *theft*

Rome, 3–4, 9–10, 230; Roman empire, 12, 51–52, 106, 112, 227, 230; Roman period, 35, 42, 223.

See also *comparative studies: China and Rome*

Rong Fei, 77. See also *Xiang Fei*

S

sacrifice, 31, 39–40, 253n82; animal, 32, 33, 41–42, 45–46, 103, 166, 186, 189, *plate* 5; food, 42, 45–46, 123; human, 33, 40–42, 46–47, 125, 171–72, 178, 188–90, 192, 270n2; object, 32, 41, 42, 45–46. See also *offerings*

Sanyangzhuang, 25map, 28, 30, 38

Saqqara, 188, 270n2

Satire on the Trades, 150, 154, 155

scarab, 71, 72, 158, 159fig., 160, 166, 269n79

Scheidel, Walter, 5, 9

Scorpion, King, 29, *plate* 1

scribes: as bureaucrats, 13, 54, 141–42, 151, 163, 169; Chinese, 116, 120–21, 133, 141–42, 144, 148, 150–52, 154, 266n4; class consciousness of, 62, 141, 146, 149, 154–56; culture of, 142, 149, 170; Egyptian, 126–27, 131–32, 136–38, 141–43, 146, 148, 150, 152–54, 199, 266n3; occupational identity of, 121, 142, 168–69, 207; power of, 141–42, 146, 169–70; practices of, 54, 58–59, 121, 133, 145–46, 148, 175; in social consciousness, 7, 141–42, 154–56, 165–70; kits of, 142–44, 143fig., 145–46, 147fig., 160, 168–69; social networks of, 62, 90, 146; tombs of, 17, 116, 120–21, 157–69; tools of, 142–48, 143fig., 147fig., 161, 162fig., 199, 207; training of, 17, 44, 54, 148–50, 267n25

Sea Peoples, 112

Second Dynasty, 24, 270n2

Second Intermediate Period, 108, 257n103

Sehaseq, 154

senet, 18, 213, 220, 223–26, 223fig., 225fig. See also *game board*

Seni, 212, *plate* 18

Sennedjem, 213, 225, 225fig., *plate* 20

Senneferi, 259n138

Senwosret II, King, 35

Senwosret III, King, 174–75

Seqenenre Tao, King, 52

serdab: chamber, 174, 200; statue, 172–73, 174

servants: figurines of, 17, 172–74, 176–77, 179, 182, 183fig., 184fig., 185–86, 192–95, 203–5 (see also *figurines*); king as divine, 36; of palace, 73, 172; gendered discussion of, 191, 203; sacrificed in burial, 172; servitude as punishment, 123; social status of, 130, 132, 137, 139,

199; vassal rulers as metaphorical, 62
 Seti I, King, 45, 80, 108, 109fig.
 Seventeenth Dynasty, 124
 Shaanxi, 26, 40, 179
shabtis, 167, 175, 188, 190, 199, 272n65
 Shandong, 38, 151, 178–79, 215
 Shang dynasty, 13, 39, 179, 188; administration, 266n4; afterlife conceptions during, 208, 214, 216; king of, 208
 Shangshu, 96. See also *Book of Documents*, *The*
 Shanhaijing, 40, 217. See also *Classic of Mountains and Seas*
 Sharuhén, 52
 Shaushka, 73. See also *Ishtar*
 Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, 157, 175
 Shi ji, 32, 33, 40, 54, 109, 121, 123, 156. See also *Records of the Grand Scribe*
 Shi Rao, 150–52, 154, 163–65, 164fig., 166–69, 179, 195–96
 ships. See *boats*
 Shu (deity), 224
 Shu, Kingdom of, 33
 Shu Province, 33
shudao, 145, 162fig. See also *book knife*
 Shuihudi, 25map, 123, 129, 149, 160, 163, 167
 Shun, Emperor, 97. See also *Shundi*
 Shundi, 97. See also *Shun*, Emperor
 Shuttarna II, 71, 72–73
 Sichuan, 33, 219
 silk, 59, 60, 75, 145, 165, 179, 182, 191, 193, 197, *plate 6b*. See also *textile*
 Silk Road, 51, 60
 silver, 50, 57, 59, 60, 74, 80, 124, 158, 160, 166. See also *currency*
 Sima Qian: comparative studies of, 12; on diplomatic communication, 54, 63, 64; on the First Emperor of Qin, 185, 231; as historian, 15, 109; as historical figure, 32, 156; on law, 121, 123, 156; on rivers and canals, 31, 32, 33, 40–41; on Wang Mang, 109
 Sixth Dynasty, 38, 79, 173
 Skocpol, Theda, 5–6
 slaves, 49, 52, 74, 91–92, 101, 117, 189, 205
 Smendes, 80. See also *Nesbanejed*
 Smenkhkare, King, 102, 108
 Sobekemsaf II, King, 124
 soldiers: Chinese, 51, 186, 189, *plate 16*; Egyptian, 71–72, 172, 177
 Somers, Margaret, 5
 Son of Heaven, 89. See also *Mandate of Heaven*
 Song dynasty, 27, 85; administration, 77
 Spengler, Oswald, 7
 state formation: Chinese, 30; Egyptian, 29, 31; theories of, 19–20, 29, 47
 statuary: Chinese, 88, 185–86, *plate 16*; cult, 80, 173; Egyptian, 79, 80, 141, 158, 159fig., 161fig., 166–67, 170, 200; funerary, 141, 158, 159fig., 161fig., 166–67, 170, 200, 172–73; *plate 8*, *plate 12*, *plate 13*. See also *figurines*
 statuettes. See *figurines*
 Statutes on Scribes, 149, 150
 stelae: boundary, 86, 98–100, 99fig., 102; funerary, 153; restoration, 88, 105; victory, 52
 Sudan, 72
 Sui, 146, 147fig.
 sycomore, 78–79, 176, 197–98. See also *wood*
 Syria(-Palestine), 22map, 49, 52, 53, 54, 60–61, 71, 72, 74, 75, 83, 104, 259n129

T

Taduhepa, 62, 73, 258n107, 258n122. See also *Kiya*
talatat, 94–95, 261n57, *plate 5*
Tale of Sinuhe, 150, *plate 6a*
Tale of Two Brothers, 129
 tamarisk, 78–79. See also *wood*

Tang dynasty, 27
 Tanis, 24
 Taosi site, 13
 Tarim Basin, 50
 taxation: agricultural, 31; Chinese practices of, 41, 84, 91, 102, 113, 134; Egyptian practices of, 31, 49, 108; exemptions from, 102, 113; scribal role in, 17, 146, 163
 Tell Basta, 22*map*, 60. *See also* Bubastis
 Tell el-Amarna: as administrative capital, 54, 86, 95, 99*fig.*, 101, 104, 106; as religious capital, 87, 90, 93, 98, 99*fig.*, 101. *See also* Akhetaten
 temples: administration of, 195; architecture of, 93–95; Chinese ancestral temples, 88, 93, 97, 103, 106; crimes against, 139; as economic centers, 92, 195; as educational centers, 149; Egyptian mortuary temples, 108, 122; Egyptian state temples, 87–88, 93–95, 100, 106; as judiciary centers, 125, 139
 Teng, Governor, 116
 terracotta, 185–86, 193–95
 terracotta warriors, 80, 186, 189, 197–99, 203, *plate* 16
 textile, 51, 59, 60, 124, 145, 158, 179, 198, 258n107
 texts: administrative, 31, 49, 81, 142, 163, 168, 170; commemorative, 72, 88; cosmographic, 216; diary, 151–52, 164*fig.*, 165; didactic, 152–53, 168; diplomatic, 54, 62, 103, 258n122; divination, 39, 152–53, 163, 168; execration, 79; funerary, 36, 43–44, 146, 210–14, 218–19, 224–25, 259n138; historical, 87, 107, 109, 163; hymns, 42–45, 86, 100, 108, 153, 253n100; imperial, 28, 51, 58, 72, 152; instructional, 222; inventory, 165, 167, 205; lamentation, 38; legal, 96, 121, 123, 126, 128, 149, 162*fig.*, 163, 168, 170, 229, 231; letters, 233, 265n38; literary, 24, 129, 142, 148, 152–53, 155, 233; magical, 153, 202, 205, 233; mathematical, 121; medical, 121, 153, 233; offering, 45–46, 205; poetic, 69, 86, 152, 216; political, 121; religious, 36, 40, 43–44, 90–91, 100, 108, 217–19; ritual, 36, 39, 79, 120, 199–200, 225, 233; school, 43, 122, 141, 149–50, 153–55, 160, 163, 168, 231; survival of written, 12, 54, 86–87, 115, 116, 120–21, 231; wisdom, 128, 149–50, 153, 155
 Thebes, 22*map*, 269n66; law court of, 120, 122; as mortuary location, 107, 122, 175, 193, 199; name of, 136; people of, 257n103; as regional power center, 52, 62, 72, 80, 92, 106, 196; as religious center, 80, 86, 87–88, 92–93, 102; temples of, 79, 84, 87, 89, 94, 100, 122, 195, *plate* 2
 theft, 120, 122, 124–28, 139–40, 229
 Third Dynasty, 29, 261n57
 Thirteenth Dynasty, 48
 Thoth, 146, 158, 169, 213, 224
 Three Kingdoms Period, 112
 Thucydides, 12
 Thutmose I, King, 52
 Thutmose III, King, 49, 52, 53, 71, 75, 79, 81, 83, 259n129, 259n138
 Thutmose IV, King, 71, 84
 Tian Fen, 32
 Tiandi, 217. *See also* Heavenly Tearch
 Tianmen, 219–20, 220*fig.* *See also* Gate of Heaven
 Tianxia, 29, 228. *See also* All under Heaven
 Tibetan Plateau, 25
 Tigris River, 22*map*, 71
 timber. *See* wood
 tin, 50
 Ting Wei, 120
 Ti, 71, 72, 84, 260n13
 tomb models, 17, 171–72, 232: administrative scenes, 176–77, 191, 200, 202–3; agricultural scenes, 174, 176–77, 179, 182, 192, 200; bakeries, 173, 176, 178, 190, 201, 273n86, *plate* 11; Bersha Procession, 178, 204, *plate* 13; boats, 174, 175, 176*fig.*, 177–78, 191, 200, 205; breweries, 173, 175–76, 177, 201, 273n86, *plate* 11; butchery, 173, 174, 176, 179, 200, 202, 273n86; carpentry shop, 174, 176, 177, 197, 273n86, *plate* 14; carriages, 179–80, 191, 197, 201, 205; chariots, 186, *plate* 16; Chinese development of, 178–88, 205; domestic architecture, 174, 176, 179–80, 181*fig.*, 182, 190, 193, 197, *plate* 10; Egyptian development of, 172–78, 205; entertainment scenes, 173–74, 179, 180*fig.*, 181*fig.*, 182, 183*fig.*, 191, *plate* 15; food serving scenes, 173–74; function of, 188–93; granaries, 146, 158, 173, 174–80, 182, 190–93, 196–98,

plate 9; industrial architecture, 173, 176, 179–80, 200; life-sized of, 185–86; kitchens, 179–80, 182, 192, 201–2, 205; materiality of, 196–99; as microcosms, 191; military scenes, 174, 177, 179, 186–87, 191, *plate 16*; offering scenes, 174, 176–77, 194, *plate 12*, *plate 13*; production of, 193–95; production scenes, 173–74, 175, 177, 197, *plate 9*, *plate 11*, *plate 14*; quality of, 174, 177–78, 193, 198–99, 204; scale of, 202–5; social context of, 195–96; soul houses, 190, 195; storage scenes, 173–74, 177, 190, 197–98; as tableaux, 179–80, 188–90, 193; tools, 175, 187, 195, 197; viewing of, 199–205; watchtowers, 180, 182, 192, 193; workshops, 178, 193–95, 197, 273n86

Tomb Robbery Papyri, 122, 124

tombs: at Abydos, 188; of Akhenaten, 100, 106–7; of Amenemhat III, 35; Anyang tomb no. 1001, 188–89; of Ay, 100; at Bajiaolang, 168–69; at Beni Hassan, 175, 176*fig.*, 200; at Deir el-Bahari, 146, 157–58, 166–68, 177*fig.*, 178, 193, 195, 200, 202; at Deir el-Bersha, 177–78, 196; at Deir el-Medina, 122, 213, 225, 225*fig.*, *plate 20*; desecration of, 107–8, 124–25, 139; of Djehuty, 158–60, 166–69; of Djehutynakht, 177–78, 196; of Djer, 188; of Djnet, 188; of Dou Wan, 182, 196; at el-Lahun, 35; of the First Emperor of Qin, 185–88, 189, *plate 16*; of Han emperors, 88; at Jiaxiang, 215, 215*fig.*; of Lady Dai, 182, 183*fig.*, 196, 200, *plate 15*; of Liu Qi, 186; of Liu Sheng, 182, 184*fig.*, 185, 200–201; of Liu Xiu, 168–69, 160, 163, 165–66, 177*fig.*; of Liu Xiu, 157, 259n130, 261n73, 273n92; at Mancheng, 182, 196, 200–201; of the Marquis of Haihun, 222; *mastaba* tombs, 200; at Mawangdui, 182, 183*fig.*, 196, 200, 221, *plate 15*; Mawangdui tomb no. 3, 221; of Meketre, 146, 157, 175, 177*fig.*, 193, 195, 200, 202; of Mentuhotep II, 178; of Merneptah, 153; of Meryra II, 75, 76*fig.*; of Meryrehashetef, 173; of Nefery, 175, 176*fig.*, 200; of Nubkhaes, 124; at Nülangshan, 178; placement of, 157–58, 160, 163, 165–66, 177*fig.*; pyramids, 34, 35, 124, 186, 210; of Ramose, 107, 168, 199, *plate 7*; at Saqqara, 188, 210; at Sedment, 173; of Sennedjem, 213, 225, 225*fig.*, *plate 20*; of Senwosret II, 35; at Shangdong, 215, 215*fig.*; at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, 107, 168, 175, 199, *plate 7*; of Shi Rao, 151–52, 163–65, 164*fig.*, 166–68, 179, 196, 222; at Shuihudi, 116, 160–63, 162*fig.*, 165, 221; Shuihudi tomb no. 11, 221; size of, 160, 163, 165; of Sobekemsaf II, 124; at Tell el-Amarna, 75, 76*fig.*, 86, 100, 106–7; TT359, 224; of Tutankhamen, 169, 178, 223; of Unas, 210; in the Valley of the Kings, 84, 124, 153, 169, 178, 223; in the Valley of the Queens, 124; of Wah, 157–58, 166–68, 177*fig.*; of Wu Ding, 188–89; of Wu family, 215, 215*fig.*; Wuyingshan tomb no. 11, 179, 180*fig.*; of Xi, 116, 160–63, 162*fig.*, 165, 166–68; at Xi'an, 185–88, 189, *plate 16*; at Yangling, 186; Yinwan tomb no. 6, 151–52, 163–65, 166–68, 179, 164*fig.*, 196, 222; Yuzhuang tomb no. 1, 180–82, 181*fig.*, 192; at Zhangjiapu, 96; Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247, 120–21

tortoise shell: Chinese, 91, 97; Egyptian, 143*fig.* See also *currency*

Toynbee, Arnold J., 7

trade: domestic, 15; Egyptian routes, 49–50, 80, 105; international, 15–16, 49–50, 60, 63, 78, 80, 197

transportation: in the afterlife, 191, 205, 213–14, 223–25; boats, 79, 80; carriages, 161; chariots, 72–73, 74, 75, 186; horses, 52, 59, 68, 70, 71–73, 74, 75, 79, 80–82, 189; modes of, 171

trials: in Chinese courts, 118, 123–24, 124–26, 129–30, 132–33; in Egyptian courts, 114–15, 118–20, 124–25, 126–28, 129, 130–32; for fornication and adultery, 128–33; interrogations, 115, 118; overseers of, 118, 120, 122; records of, 120–39, 127*fig.*, 131*fig.*; sentencing, 124–25, 126, 128, 130, 132–33; structure of, 118–20; for theft, 122–28; use of oracles in, 119–20; witnesses, 115, 118

tribute: from China, 55, 59, 66, 68–69; to China, 53, 70, 81–82; coordination of, 50–51; demand for, 61, 102; from Egypt, 57, 71; to Egypt, 52, 72–73, 74, 76*fig.*, 83; function of, 49, 61, 66, 73, 83; as means of resource acquisition, 51, 78–79, 81–82; movement of, 50, 54, 77; pageantry of, 76*fig.*, 102–4; women as, 72–73, 74–75, 77, 78, 82, 259n129

Trigger, Bruce G., 6, 11, 13, 49

tripods, ritual, 96–97, 96*fig.*, 161

Turfan, 50

Tushratta, 55*fig.*, 58, 64, 71, 72–73, 105, 258n107, 258n122

Tutankhamen, King: family of, 73, 106; reign of, 54, 88, 105–6, 108; tomb of, 60, 160, 169, 175, 178, 223, 270n102

Twelfth Dynasty, 16, 35, 157, 174, 177, 188

Twentieth Dynasty, 36, 42, 45, 80, 112, 122, 124–25, 155

Twenty-First Dynasty, 24, 80

Twenty-Second Dynasty, 233

Twenty-Third Dynasty, 233

Tyuyü, 72, 84

U

Unas, King, 36, 210
underworld. *See* [afterlife](#)
universalism, 7
Upper Egypt, 25, 49, 112, 204, 208
ushabti. *See* [shabti](#)

V

Valley of the Kings, 72, 84, 107, 119, 124, 149, 152–53, 194, 213
Valley of the Queens, 124
vassal state: acquisition of, 52; diplomacy, 53, 62, 65, 68–70, 72–75, 77, 78, 104–5; economic exchange, 79; Egyptian administration of, 52, 54, 61, 62, 72, 74–75, 102; Han administration of, 50–51, 53, 54, 59, 61, 68–70, 77, 82, 103; as means of empire control, 13, 16, 72–75, 82; Xiongnu administration of, 59, 65
Vietnam, 48, 50
Virgil, 227
vizier: administrative role of, 152, 175; diplomatic role of, 62, 73; judicial role of, 118, 120, 122, 125, 129; scribal role of, 141, 168, 170; tombs of, 193, 195, 199, [plate 7](#)

W

wadang, 93, 98fig.
wadjet eye, 200
Wah, 157–58: tomb of, 158, 166–68, 177fig.
Waley, Arthur, 81
Wang Anshi, 85
Wang Chong, 155
Wang Mang, Emperor: administration of, 38, 85, 262n96; architectural program of, 93, 97; biography of, 86–87, 109–11; *damnatio memoriae* of, 106, 108–11; diplomacy of, 102–5; economic policies of, 38, 91, 96, 102, 105, 260n40; family of, 86, 88, 93, 97–98, 111; reforms of, 16, 85, 87–89, 90–91, 94, 96–97, 101–6, 111–12, 229; religion of, 89, 96–97
Wang Zhengjun, 93, 97, 110
warfare: alliances, 73; captives of, 189; in social consciousness, 208; military campaigns, 53, 71, 73, 79, 80–81, 104, 230; raids, 52, 53; revolt suppression, 50–51; spoils of, 52, 75, 83; tactical flooding, 34. *See also* [military](#)
Warring States period: agriculture, 28, 33; burial practices, 178–79, 215, 217; comparative studies of, 12–13, 230; diplomacy, 55; economy, 27; law, 116; material culture, 216; politics of, 3, 13; religion, 40, 179, 215–17, 233; warfare, 34, 230
weaponry, 161, 163, 166, 168, 186, 188
Weber, Max, 230
Wei River, 26, 33
Wen, Emperor, 56, 59, 64, 123–24
Wenamen, 80, 81
Western Han period, 13: administration, 109, 112, 145, 151; agriculture, 27; burial practices, 163, 193; comparative studies, 13, 15; economy, 27, 92; empire, 13, 48, 50, 83–84; history, 109; religion, 217; warfare, 50; water management, 26, 28
Western Regions, 25map, 50–51, 63, 69–70, 73, 82, 103–4, 110. *See also* [Xiyu](#)
Western Zhou period, 85, 89, 91, 96–97, 179
wheat, 30
wills, 133–39, 135fig., 137fig.; enactment of, 17, 120–21, 133–34; of Naunakhte, 122, 136–39, 137fig., 153, 155; of Zhu Ling and the Old Woman, 121, 134–36, 135fig., 265n55
Window of Appearance, 93, 95fig.
Wittfogel, Karl, 11, 19–20, 29, 30, 47
wood: as building material, 78–79; byproducts of, 144; in material culture, 52, 78–79, 169, 221; in model construction, 173, 176–78, 180, 182, 186, 190, 194–95, 197–98, 200, 204; in mortuary culture, 52, 79; as trade commodity, 52, 59; as writing material, 144, 146, 148, 165, 167–68, 198
writing, 141: implements of, 142–48, 143fig., 147fig., 161, 162fig., 165; kits, 143fig., 145–46, 147fig., 160, 168–69
Wu, Emperor, 32, 36, 41, 49, 50, 53, 68–69, 80–81, 84

Wu Ding, King, 188
Wu family, 215, 215fig.
Wu Hung, 178, 193, 203
Wulei, 25map, 53
Wuse shisheng, 222. See also *Five Colored Pieces Eat Their Way to Victory, The*
Wusun, 25map, 52, 53, 56, 68–70, 73, 77, 81
Wuyingshan site, 179, 182

X

Xi, 116, 160–63, 162fig., 166–68
Xi'an, 26, 185
Xia dynasty, 32, 36
Xiang Fei, 77. See also *Rong Fei*
Xianyang, 33
Ximen Bao, 40–41
Xin dynasty, 38, 85, 90, 93, 102
Xiongnu: administration, 58–60, 62–64, 66–70, 75; confederation, 25map, 50, 53, 54, 56; as dependent state, 50, 53, 58–59; diplomacy, 53, 55–60, 62–64, 66–69, 73, 82, 104; as frontier region, 51–52, 57; history, 110; nomads, 48, 51, 65; as peer-polity, 60, 68, 70, 75, 77; as vassal state, 58–60, 84, 103–4; warfare, 53, 68–70, 73, 80
Xiwangmu, 16, 18, 93, 217–20, 219fig., 222, 226–27. See also *Queen Mother of the West*
Xiyu, 50–51. See also *Western Regions*
Xuan, Emperor, 103
Xuanquanzhi, 25map, 54, 81, 257n99
xue, 145, 162fig.

Y

Yan, 34
yang, 36, 214
Yang Yun, 156
Yangling, 186, 194, 197
Yangzi River, 25map, 25, 30, 33
Yangzi River valley, 40
Yanqi, 25map, 104. See also *Karasahr*
Yantie lun, 192. See also *Discourses on Salt and Iron*
Yellow Emperor, 97. See also *Huangdi*
Yellow River, 16, 19, 25map, 25; flood plain of, 23fig.; flooding of, 27–28, 30, 32–34, 36, 38, 105, 228; religious significance of, 36–37, 39–42, 46–47, 153n82; shifting course of, 27map, 27, 38, 105; silting of, 26–27; texts pertaining to, 31–34, 36–37, 39–42
Yellow Springs, 215. See also *Huangquan*
yin, 36–37, 214
Ying Shao, 33
Yinwan, 163, 195, 222
Yu the Great, 32, 36
Yuan, Emperor, 97
Yueshang, 103
Yunmeng, 160
Yushi Dafu, 120, 266n4
Yuya, 72, 84
Yuzhuang, 180, 185, 192, 195, 200–201

Z

Zeker-Ba'al, 80
Zhang Anshi, 194
Zhang Qian, 51, 52–53, 63, 68, 70, 81
Zhang Shizhi, 124
Zhangjiashan, 121, 125, 130, 133, 136, 149, 150, 231
Zhao Feiyan, Empress, 37
Zhao Tuo, 61

Zheng Guo, 33
Zhengguo Canal, [25map](#), 30, 33
Zhonghang Yue, 58
Zhongshan, 168, 182
Zhou, Duke of, 85, 89, 96, 103
Zhou dynasty, 29, 39, 96–97; administration, 231, 266n4; empire, 90
Zhouli, 91, 96. See also *Rituals of the Zhou*
Zhu Ling, 121, 134, 136, 138
Zhuangzi, 41, 217. See also *Master Zhuang*
zhuhou wang, 182. See also *regional lord*
Zou Yan, 216
Zouyan shu, 120–21, 125, 132, 155. See also *Book of Submitted Doubtful Cases*
Zuo Tradition (Zuozhuan), 39

"A pioneering work. This engaging book presents fully documented case studies, on topics ranging from empire to the afterlife."

— John Baines, professor emeritus, Egyptology, University of Oxford

"Brilliantly conceived and deeply researched, *Ancient Egypt and Early China* unfolds new perspectives on administrative, legal, scribal, and religious history by way of structural comparison, complete with a sophisticated reflection on the goals, promises, and methodologies of comparative study altogether."

— Martin Kern, Department of East Asian Studies, Princeton University

"Contributes careful, bold, comparative study of two of the globe's most influential ancient civilizations, analyzing shared human systems—introducing some of us to ancient Egypt and others to early China, but all of us to fresh insights about shared human systems of power."

— Kara Cooney, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures,
University of California, Los Angeles

"A wonderful book: the materials are rich, the scope ambitious, the comparisons illuminating, and the presentation lucid."

— Wang Haicheng, Department of Art History, University of Washington

"A major and invaluable contribution to the growing body of comparative work on ancient societies."

— Walter Scheidel, Department of Classics, Stanford University



UNIVERSITY OF
WASHINGTON PRESS

Seattle uwapress.uw.edu